

# MEDITERRÁN TANULMÁNYOK

## ÉTUDES SUR LA RÉGION MÉDITERRANÉENNE



**XV.**

**UNIVERSITÉ DE SZEGED**  
Département d'Histoire Moderne  
et d'Études Méditerranéennes

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# ***Admiral Nelson's Correspondence in the Campaign of Trafalgar, with a Special Emphasis on the Information Connected to the Franco-Spanish Combined Fleet (October 1805)\****

**András ILLÉS**  
**University of Szeged**

In 2005, the British Royal Navy celebrated the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Britain's greatest naval success and perhaps the most famous naval battle of all time. The best-known naval success of Britain, the battle of Trafalgar, is also the triumph of Admiral Horatio Nelson, who lost his life in the clash, which was the zenith of his life and career. The naval aspects of the Napoleonic wars and the deeds of Nelson are not widely known, however, in Hungary, where land warfare has always been in the focus of attention. A kind of indifference towards the naval aspects of that time is also reflected in the Hungarian book-making. Apart from translations of a few English popularizing<sup>1</sup> or out-of-date works, one can hardly find books available on the topic in Hungary. The situation is even worse when looking at the primary sources of naval history or other source-publications which, apart from a few remarks or citations, completely unfit for scientific investigation, were absolutely missing in Hungarian language until 2005.<sup>2</sup> Though the number of English language works on the topic is small in Hungary, fortunately, the University Library of Szeged holds several useful volumes.<sup>3</sup> The World Wide Web also alleviates the work of

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\* I would like to thank Frigyes Hausz and Ferenc Csákváry for their guidance in the revising of this article for publication.

<sup>1</sup> To mention the most significant and useful works in Hungarian: SOUTHEY, Robert: *Nelson életrajza*. (Nelson's Biography) Published by the Hungarian Academy of Science, Budapest, 1902. Translated and annotated by: Antal Reményi; KEEGAN, John: *A tengeri hadviselés története*. (History of the Sea Warfare) Corvina, Budapest, 1998. Translated by: András Soproni; SWEETMAN, Jack: *Admirálisok. A történelem legkiválóbb tengernagyai, 1585–1945*. (Admirals. The Most Excellent Admirals of the History, 1585–1945) Zrínyi Kiadó, Budapest, 1999. Abridged edition, translated by: Pál Félix.

<sup>2</sup> To my knowledge, the first source-publication in this subject: ILLÉS András: *Dokumentumok a trafaigari hadjáratból*. (Documents from the Campaign of Trafalgar) Hadtörténelmi Közlemények (Quarterly of Military History), December 2005. pp. 962–982.

<sup>3</sup> In addition to the above-mentioned, useful for historical researches e.g. TUNSTALL, Brian: *Nelson*. Duckworth, London, 1933; TRACY, Nicholas: *Nelson's Battles. The Art of Victory in the Age of Sail*. Chatham Publishing, London, 1996.; LAVERY, Brian: *Nelson's Navy. The ships, men and organization 1793–1815*. Naval Institute Press, Annapolis, 2000.

the investigator, and is becoming an essential tool of historical researches. The Internet is resourceful – it provides useful literature and primary sources – but the researcher has to look at it with a critical eye.<sup>4</sup> So, basically, the Hungarian historian has to face a lot of difficulties when trying to deal with this topic. However, the *raison d'être* for such researches is reinforced by the fact, that Hungary (as part of the Austro-Hungarian Dual Monarchy between 1867 and 1918) possessed a navy, which – due to the efforts of navalism<sup>5</sup> – began to develop to considerable strength at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Based on this fact, I think, there is a need to create a notion in the Hungarian historiography – and in common knowledge – on the history of wartime sailing.

In this article, I try to give a survey of the Hungarian opportunities of the research work on the field of naval warfare. I will try to give an insight into Nelson's correspondence, which is considered to be one of the most important sources of naval history of that time. The correspondence covers the three weeks before the battle of Trafalgar. I will put a special emphasis on Nelson's information on the opposing Franco-Spanish combined fleet. What kind of information did he have about his enemies? Did he underestimate them? Did he anticipate their actions? If yes, how did he try to react? These are the main questions which this work tries to answer.

The research is based on the Nelson-papers, published in the seven volumes of *The Dispatches and Letters of Vice Admiral Lord Viscount Horatio Nelson*, edited by Sir Nicholas Harris Nicolas between 1844–1846.<sup>6</sup> In the following I will outline the situation

Moreover, the library holds the original edition of the above-mentioned book of John Keegan (KEEGAN, John: *The Price of Admiralty. The Evolution of Naval Warfare*. New York, Wiking, 1988.), and I used this, instead of the Hungarian translation. In the case of the work of Robert Southey, the Hungarian translation is taken into consideration, because of its annotations, where the translator (Antal Reményi) explains the statements of the author, and corrects his errors.

<sup>4</sup> The greatest and dynamically expanding database is the *Project Gutenberg Free eBook Library* (<http://www.gutenberg.org>), where the relevant works of authors – like William Beatty, Julian Corbett, James Harrison, Alfred Thayer Mahan, Theodore Roosevelt or Robert Southey, mentioned above – can be found on the history of sailing or on Nelson and the campaign of Trafalgar. Moreover, on the World Wide Web, it is easier than ever to access the digitalized materials of various magazines, archives etc. This list, fortunately, could be continued for a long time.

<sup>5</sup> Besides Károly Csonkaréti, Mihály Krámlí, who at present is perhaps the most significant Hungarian researcher of maritime history in the subject of Austria-Hungary's navy, describes navalism as it has been „*originated from the compound of patriotism, national pride, economic interest and self-interest, attraction to the sea power and military considerations*”. See KRÁMLI Mihály: *A császári és királyi haditengerészet és Magyarország. Magyarország szerepe a közös haditengerészet fejlesztésében*. (The Imperial and Royal Navy and Hungary. Hungary's Role in the Development of the Common Navy) Pro Pannonia Kiadói Alapítvány, Pécs, 2004. p. 219.

<sup>6</sup> The Trafalgar-letters of the seven-volumed work are quoted letter-perfect and with the original footnotes, without page numbers, in an on-line periodical, *The War Times Journal* (<http://www.wtj.com>), under the title *Letters and Dispatches of Horatio Nelson* (<http://www.wtj.com/archives/nelson/> – access: 10. June 2005.; hereafter: LDHN). Although the general editor of the journal, James Burback, does not mention his source, the title and the introduction to the letters suggest that it must be the Nicolas-collection.



of the British fleet (stationed at the Bay of Cadiz) and that of the Franco-Spanish combined fleet (anchored in Cadiz harbour) before the arrival of Nelson. After that – based on the Nelson-letters – I will try to give a picture of the combined fleet from Nelson's point of view.

### *The Background of the Trafalgar campaign*

Taking the general strategical scheme of the naval conflicts between the English and French Navy during the 18<sup>th</sup> century into consideration, we can make the following summary: both the strategical and tactical advantages were on the side of the British fleet, so it blockaded the harbours of France and its allies. While the British fleet tried to force its opponents into a decisive battle, the squadrons of the French fleet made attempts to break out, and tried to harass the British merchant shipping.<sup>7</sup> In 1804 a war had broken out between Britain and Spain and it has resulted that the Spanish fleet was also at Napoleon's disposal by 1805. This increase in naval power gave the theoretical opportunity to Napoleon to invade Great Britain.<sup>8</sup> The preparations for such an action have begun as early as 1803, but the Empereur was not able to set up a fleet, strong enough to dominate the English Channel as a *sine qua non* of the invasion by spring and summer 1805. Finally, in August 1805, the combined fleet, commanded by Admiral Pierre de Villeneuve sailed into the port of Cadiz, Spain, and remained there until the third week of October.<sup>9</sup>

After two years of consecutive duty and less than a short month's leave Nelson, on board of *Victory*, 100, joined to the British fleet in the Bay of Cadiz on the 28<sup>th</sup> of September.<sup>10</sup> The next day, on his 47<sup>th</sup> birthday,<sup>11</sup> he took over the fleet's command from his

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*Nota bene:* this collection does not contain every letter of Admiral Nelson, but the most significant ones are included.

<sup>7</sup> For such consolidation of the British and French naval warfare, see SWEETMAN pp. 73–76.

<sup>8</sup> TRACY pp. 157–158.

<sup>9</sup> Vice Admiral Pierre Charles Jean-Baptiste Silvestre de Villeneuve was the commander-in-chief of the French fleet, and the Franco-Spanish combined fleet, anchored at the harbour of Cadiz, his flagship was the *Bucentaure*, 80. According to Napoleon's invasion directives, the ships of the line, anchored in various French and Spanish ports (Brest, Lorient, Rochefort, Toulon, and Ferrol, Cadiz, Cartagena), were to force their way through the British blockade and to unite in the West-Indies. The next step for the Franco-Spanish fleet would have been to sail into the English Channel, and in order to clear the way for the invasion forces, to acquire the naval superiority there. Apart from Villeneuve's Toulon squadron, however, only a few ships managed to put to sea, and after waiting for a short time they started marauding off Martinique, then headed back to the French waters. (Meanwhile Nelson worked hard to intercept them with a fleet of similar size.) As his forces were not strong enough to secure the English Channel, Villeneuve headed towards Ferrol, but on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of July at Cape Finisterre he encountered Sir Robert Calder's squadron. Due to bad weather conditions, after the battle, the two fleets, stared at each other, then Villeneuve left heading towards Vigo. Finally, on the 19<sup>th</sup> of August, he arrived at Cadiz. For Napoleon's invasion directives, Villeneuve's escape and the chase by Nelson, particularly see KEEGAN pp. 24–28.

<sup>10</sup> The harbour of Toulon was under the blockade of Nelson since June 1803, see CALLO, Joseph F.: *Nelson Speaks. Admiral Lord Nelson in his own Words*. Chatham Publishing, London, 2001.

childhood friend, Vice Admiral Cuthbert Collingwood.<sup>12</sup> 29 ships of the line of the British fleet anchored about 90–100 km away from Cadiz, where 36 sails of the line of the combined fleet were under blockade.<sup>13</sup> The port was under the surveillance of a frigate squadron, commanded by Captain Henry Blackwood, who observed the enemy from a distance of 35–40 km.<sup>14</sup> There were two good reasons for this: on the one hand, the British fleet was out of the sight of the combined fleet, and the lack of information about the strength of the enemy made the French hesitant.<sup>15</sup> On the other hand the British “*must guard against being caught with a Westerly wind near Cadiz, as a Fleet of Ships with so many Three-deckers would inevitably be forced into the Straits [of Gibraltar], and then Cadiz would be perfectly free for the Enemy to come out*”<sup>16</sup> – as Nelson wrote to Lord Barham, the First Lord of the Admiralty.

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xxxii. (*Chronology*). After the escape and chasing of Villeneuve, Nelson disembarked at Spithead on the 18<sup>th</sup> of August in 1805, see TRACY p. 166. He spent only three weeks in his Merton estate (he owned it since the October of 1801), then on the 14<sup>th</sup> of September, at Portsmouth he stepped on the board of the *Victory*, as he wrote in his private diary, published by BEATTY, William: *Authentic Narrative of the Death of Lord Nelson*. T. Cadell and W. Davies, London, 1807. (*Appendix: Memorandum Book*) (<http://www.gutenberg.org/files/15233/15233-h/15233-h.htm> – access: 13. September 2005.)

<sup>11</sup> Nelson was born at Burnham Thorpe, Norfolk, on the 29<sup>th</sup> of September 1758.

<sup>12</sup> Vice Admiral Cuthbert Collingwood was Nelson's second-in-command at Trafalgar and after the death of Nelson he became the commander-in-chief of the Mediterranean Fleet, his flagship was the *Royal Sovereign*, 100. Nelson and Collingwood both were lieutenants in the West Indies during the American War of Independence. As Collingwood wrote to one of his friends on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of November 1805: „*Since the year '73 we have been in the terms of the greatest intimacy*”, cites TRACY p. 169. They both were protégés of Admiral Sir Peter Parker. Although Collingwood was the senior of the two, Nelson got the promotions in the first place, and Collingwood only followed him later. About their service in the West-Indies and their advancements at this time, see MAHAN, Alfred Thayer: *The Life of Lord Nelson. The Embodiment of the Sea Power of Great Britain. Vol. I*. Sampson Law, Marston & Company Limited, London, 1897. pp. 17–21. (<http://www.gutenberg.org/files/16914/16914-h/16914-h.htm> – access: 30. November 2005.)

<sup>13</sup> TRACY p. 166.; CALLO, Joseph F: *Lasting Lessons of Trafalgar*. Naval History Magazine, October 2005. (<http://www.usni.org/naavalhistory/articles05/NHCCalloOct-2.htm> – access: 10. October 2005.); Nelson to Marsden [2], 2. October 1805., see LDHN [http://www.wtj.com/archives/nelson/1805\\_10a.htm](http://www.wtj.com/archives/nelson/1805_10a.htm).

<sup>14</sup> Captain Henry Blackwood was the commander of the frigate *Euryalus*, 36. Early in September, Blackwood visited Nelson at Merton and informed him, that the combined fleet was anchored in Cadiz, see SOUTHEY p. 303.

<sup>15</sup> SOUTHEY pp. 393–394. endnote 15.

<sup>16</sup> Nelson to Barham, 5. October 1805., see LDHN [http://www.wtj.com/archives/nelson/1805\\_10b.htm](http://www.wtj.com/archives/nelson/1805_10b.htm).

*The Campaign of Trafalgar in Nelson's Correspondence*

The dispatches, letters, orders and notes of Admiral Nelson at Trafalgar are very wide-ranging. The number of papers in discussion is 97, without numbering: 89 letters, 6 diary entries<sup>17</sup> and 2 double-page enclosures to a letter to William Marsden, Secretary of the Admiralty, published separately.<sup>18</sup> Less than 50 % of the letters contains information about the complement of the British fleet, about 40 % deals with the provisions, and some 25–25 % of them is about the personnel and the tactics and the enemy.<sup>19</sup> Therewith only a smaller part of the letters are about the weather conditions or contain private matters.<sup>20</sup> Although the present article basically attempts to reconstruct Nelson's information and thinking about his enemies at Trafalgar on the basis of his papers, we need to make some remarks about other themes, too, since they make significant part of the correspondence.

The letters provide information about the arrivals and departures of the sails of the line and the special needs of the fleet.<sup>21</sup> The needs usually were referred to the absence of the frigates. The orders and reports from between the 4<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> of October, mention at least a dozen times that the "eyes of the fleet"<sup>22</sup> were missing.<sup>23</sup> In this respect, the most critical

<sup>17</sup> Three diary entry between the 16<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> of October are published in one item, see LDHN [http://www.wtj.com/archives/nelson/1805\\_10e.htm](http://www.wtj.com/archives/nelson/1805_10e.htm).

<sup>18</sup> William Marden was a famous orientalist and the Secretary of the Admiralty between 1804–1807. *King's College London Archives Services. Summary Guide: Marsden, William (1754–1836)* (<http://www.kcl.ac.uk/iss/archives/collect/10ma65-1.html> – access: 11. August 2005.)

<sup>19</sup> Letters, of course, usually contain various types of information in various topics, so they are difficult to categorize. That is the reason, why proportions are used instead of concrete numbers.

<sup>20</sup> These letters will only be mentioned in case, they are connected to the main subjects of this paper.

<sup>21</sup> These letters: Nelson to Marsden [1], 1. October 1805.; Nelson to Collingwood [1], 3. October 1805.; Nelson to Blackwood, 4. October 1805.; Nelson to Marsden [2, 4], 4. October 1805.; Nelson to Barham, 5. October 1805.; Nelson to Collingwood [2], 5. October 1805.; Nelson to Rose, 6. October 1805.; Nelson to Collingwood, 6. October 1805.; Nelson to Gambier, 7. October 1805.; Nelson to Marsden, 7. October 1805.; Nelson to Blackwood, 8. October 1805.; Nelson to Collingwood [3], 8. October 1805.; Nelson to Gambier, 8. October 1805.; Nelson to Collingwood [3], 9. October 1805.; Nelson to Blackwood, 9. October 1805.; Nelson to Collingwood, 10. October 1805.; Nelson to Marsden [4], 10. October 1805.; Nelson to Marsden [5], 10. October 1805.; Nelson to Ball [1], 11. October 1805.; Nelson to Marsden, 11. October 1805.; Nelson to Collingwood [1], 12. October 1805.; Nelson to Collingwood, 13. October 1805.; Nelson to Marsden [1, 2, 4], 13. October 1805.; Nelson to Blackwood, 14. October 1805.; Private Diary, 14. October 1805.; Nelson to Hamond [1], 15. October 1805.; Nelson to Collingwood, 18. October 1805. See LDHN [http://www.wtj.com/archives/nelson/1805\\_10a.htm](http://www.wtj.com/archives/nelson/1805_10a.htm), ...1805\_10b.htm, ...1805\_10c.htm, ...1805\_10d.htm, ...1805\_10e.htm.

By the arrival of Nelson, the British fleet consisted of 29 ships of the line. From that time on the number of the ships continuously increased to 35, until the 10<sup>th</sup> of October, see TRACY p. 177. However, this number is only nominal, in practice the number of the ships varied all the time, this was mainly because the convoys heading towards Gibraltar, see below and footnote 28. The day of the battle Nelson commanded 27 ships of the line.

<sup>22</sup> This is a common name to frigates. Their speed and manoeuvrability made these ships capable of doing reconnaissance missions.



period was between the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> of October. In his letter of the 4<sup>th</sup> of October, Nelson complains to William Marsden that there were only three frigates at Captain Blackwood's disposal, although at least eight would have been needed to keep Cadiz under surveillance. On the 5<sup>th</sup> of October, Nelson wrote to Lord Castlereagh (the Secretary for War Department) that only two frigates were at his command to observe the combined fleet.<sup>24</sup> Later, as the letters suggests, the problem was solved: after the 10<sup>th</sup> of October the complaining tone disappears.<sup>25</sup> The reports between the 11<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> about the tasks of the ships also reinforce the idea that the frigate-problem was solved after the 10<sup>th</sup> of October.

The letters concerning provisions and water are also of great importance, as the combat readiness of an army greatly depends on the appropriate supply.<sup>26</sup> In this particular case, the army meant 20–25 000 officers and crew. As the British fleet at Cadiz did not have transport ships and spare frigates to provide an escort, ships of the line were used.<sup>27</sup> To solve the problem of the supply of the fleet, Nelson assigned Rear Admiral Thomas Louis (he was third-in-command with his flagship *Canopus*, 80) to lead convoys to Gi-

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<sup>23</sup> These letters: Nelson to Blackwood, 4. October 1805.; Nelson to Marsden [3], 4. October 1805.; Nelson to Barham, 5. October 1805.; Nelson to Castlereagh, 5. October 1805.; Nelson to Marsden [1], 5. October 1805.; Nelson to Collingwood [1], 5. October 1805.; Nelson to Rose, 6. October 1805.; Nelson to Collingwood, 6. October 1805.; Nelson to Marsden, 7. October 1805.; Nelson to Blackwood, 8. October 1805.; Nelson to Blackwood, 9. October 1805. See LDHN [http://www.wtj.com/archives/nelson/1805\\_10a.htm](http://www.wtj.com/archives/nelson/1805_10a.htm), ...1805\_10b.htm, ...1805\_10c.htm

<sup>24</sup> „I have only two Frigates to watch them, and not one with the Fleet. I am most exceedingly anxious for more eyes, and hope the Admiralty are hastening them to me. The last Fleet was lost to me for want of Frigates; God forbid this should.” Nelson to Castlereagh, 5. October 1805., see LDHN [http://www.wtj.com/archives/nelson/1805\\_10b.htm](http://www.wtj.com/archives/nelson/1805_10b.htm).

<sup>25</sup> These letters: Nelson to Marsden, 11. October 1805.; Nelson to Collingwood [1], 12. October 1805.; Private Diary, 14. October 1805. See LDHN [http://www.wtj.com/archives/nelson/1805\\_10d.htm](http://www.wtj.com/archives/nelson/1805_10d.htm).

<sup>26</sup> These letters: Nelson to Castlereagh, 1. October 1805.; Nelson to Marsden [1], 2. October 1805.; Nelson to Ford, 2. October 1805.; Nelson to Strangford, 3. October 1805.; Nelson to Barham, 5. October 1805.; Nelson to Collingwood [1, 2, 3, 4], 5. October 1805.; Nelson to the Dey of Algiers, about 5. October 1805.; Nelson to Collingwood, 6. October 1805.; Nelson to Gambier, 7. October 1805.; Nelson to Collingwood, 7. October 1805.; Nelson to Collingwood [1, 2], 8. October 1805.; Nelson to Blackwood, 8. October 1805.; Nelson to Collingwood [1, 2], 9. October 1805.; Nelson to Blackwood, 9. October 1805.; Nelson to Collingwood [1, 2, 3], 10. October 1805.; Nelson to the respective captains [3, 5, 6, 9, 10], 10. October 1805.; Nelson to Marsden, 11. October 1805.; Nelson to Collingwood [2], 12. October 1805.; Nelson to Blackwood, 14. October 1805.; Nelson to the boatswains of H. M. Ships *Victory*, *Ajax*, and *Neptune*, 15. October 1805.; Nelson to Collingwood [1, 2], 18. October 1805. See LDHN [http://www.wtj.com/archives/nelson/1805\\_10a.htm](http://www.wtj.com/archives/nelson/1805_10a.htm), ...1805\_10b.htm, ...1805\_10c.htm, ...1805\_10d.htm, ...1805\_10e.htm.

<sup>27</sup> „[...] it is said hunger will break through stone walls – ours is only a wall of wood” – wrote Nelson rather desperately to Lord Castlereagh in his letter on the 1<sup>st</sup> of October, referring to the problem of insufficient supplies. He also emphasized the fact, that the combined fleet was free to resupply itself from the city of Cadiz or through neutral ships. Nelson to Castlereagh, 1. October 1805., see LDHN [http://www.wtj.com/archives/nelson/1805\\_10a.htm](http://www.wtj.com/archives/nelson/1805_10a.htm).

braltar and Tetuan in order to acquire supplies.<sup>28</sup> In this manner the logistic problems of the fleet were settled.

The documents dealing with the personnel are not to be neglected either.<sup>29</sup> These papers give information about the disciplinary procedures, the changes in command, and the medical services. Six letters which are concerned with the case of Vice Admiral Robert Calder deserve particular attention.<sup>30</sup>

The tactical-strategical aspects of the Nelson-papers are in close connection with his private opinion on his enemies.<sup>31</sup> These papers usually deal with the positions of the Brit-

<sup>28</sup> During the following weeks Louis was leading the rotation of convoys of 5-6 ships to Gibraltar. Finally, Louis was not able to participate in the battle, so his post was temporarily occupied by Rear Admiral William Carnegie, the 7<sup>th</sup> Earl of Northesk for the time of the battle, his flagship was the *Britannia*, 100. See TRACY p. 169. Due to the small number of frigates, Nelson was constrained to use Louis' convoys to observe the port, as it is written in his two letters to Collingwood (Nelson to Collingwood [1], 5. October 1805.; Nelson to Collingwood, 6. October 1805.), see LDHN [http://www.wtj.com/archives/nelson/1805\\_10b.htm](http://www.wtj.com/archives/nelson/1805_10b.htm).

<sup>29</sup> These letters: Nelson to Collingwood [1, 2], 3. October 1805.; Nelson to Marsden [4], 4. October 1805.; Nelson to Marsden, 5. October 1805.; Nelson to Gambier, 7. October 1805.; Nelson to Collingwood [2], 8. October 1805.; Nelson to Collingwood [2], 9. October 1805.; Nelson to Marsden [1, 4], 10. October 1805.; Nelson to the respective captains [4, 10, 12,], 10. October 1805.; Nelson to Collingwood [2], 10. October 1805.; Nelson to Marsden, 12. October 1805.; Nelson to Collingwood [1, 2], 12. October 1805.; Nelson to Marsden [4], 13. October 1805.; Nelson to the boatswains of H. M. Ships *Victory*, *Ajax*, and *Neptune*, 15. October 1805.; Nelson to Marsden, 18. October 1805. See LDHN [http://www.wtj.com/archives/nelson/1805\\_10a.htm](http://www.wtj.com/archives/nelson/1805_10a.htm), ...1805\_10b.htm, ...1805\_10c.htm, ...1805\_10d.htm, ...1805\_10e.htm.

<sup>30</sup> On his arrival Nelson handed an order to Calder, he was to appear before the Court Martial. The Admiralty accused Calder of not doing everything in order to achieve victory in his action of the 22<sup>nd</sup> of July, although he captured two ships of the line. Nelson held him back, speculating that Calder's participation in the battle would buy the Admiralty's indulgence. Calder, however, requested Nelson to let him back to home as soon as possible, and to order some captains, who were his subordination in the action on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of July, to participate on his trial. (Calder's four letters to Nelson, see LDHN <http://www.wtj.com/arcdocs/f/nel1005b.htm>.) Nelson was reluctant, however, he gave permission to leave to captains who volunteered. Finally Calder, on board of his flagship, the *Prince of Wales*, 98, left for Britain on the evening of the 13<sup>th</sup> of October. Although, he was acquitted of the charges, he was often criticised later, and soon he was forced to retirement. The Admiralty, in the end, promoted him to be the commander-in-chief of Portsmouth in 1810. See TRACY p. 169.

Nelson's letters connect to Calder's case: Nelson to Marsden [2], 2. October 1805.; Nelson to Collingwood [3], 10. October 1805.; Nelson to Collingwood [1], 12. October 1805.; Nelson to Marsden [4], 13. October 1805.; Nelson to Collingwood, 14. October 1805.; Nelson to Hamond [2], 15. October 1805. LDHN [http://www.wtj.com/archives/nelson/1805\\_10a.htm](http://www.wtj.com/archives/nelson/1805_10a.htm), ...1805\_10d.htm, ...1805\_10e.htm.

<sup>31</sup> These letters: Nelson to Castlereagh, 1. October 1805.; Nelson to Collingwood [2], 3. October 1805.; Nelson to Duff, 4. October 1805.; Nelson to Blackwood, 4. October 1805.; Nelson to Barham, 5. October 1805.; Nelson to Blackwood, 5. October 1805.; Nelson to Collingwood [2, 3, 4], 5. October 1805.; Memorandum, 9. October 1805.; Nelson to the respective captains [8, 13], 10. October 1805.; Nelson to Collingwood [3], 10. October 1805.; Nelson to Blackwood, 10. October 1805.; Nelson to Ball [1, 2], 11. October 1805.; Nelson to Collingwood [2], 12. October 1805.; Nelson to

ish fleet and the location of the frigates observing the port of Cadiz. A small part of the letters give a view of Nelson's strategical thinking (redirecting ships to the Mediterranean) and provide information about tactical instructions (signals, the Cadiz memorandum). The letters also include theoretical plans to force the enemy out of the port (using Congreve rockets or fireships<sup>32</sup>).

One letter, however, deserves particular attention. On the 4<sup>th</sup> of October Nelson, in order to resolve the problem of the inadequate number of frigates, instructed Captain George Duff, commander of *Mars*, 74, to "*keep, with the Mars, Defence, and Colossus, from three to four leagues<sup>33</sup> between the Fleet and Cadiz, in order that [Nelson] may get the information from the Frigates stationed off that Port, as expeditiously as possible*".<sup>34</sup> With this measure, Nelson not only put more frigates under Captain Blackwood's command but reinforced the cordon of communication<sup>35</sup> with stronger warships. Besides repeating the signals of the "*watching eyes*", as Nelson called the frigates sometimes, these ships of the line were able to provide strong support in case of an accidental attack.<sup>36</sup>

Another document has also to be mentioned, which is presumably the most important document of the British Royal Navy. It is known as the so-called Cadiz memorandum, which was written originally for Collingwood. The memorandum includes Nelson's tactical guiding principles for the upcoming battle. Eventually, the memorandum was distributed among all captains of the fleet. Two things have to be mentioned about the memorandum: the plan itself, and Nelson's flexible leadership. In connection with the plan Nelson wrote: "*I have [...] made up my mind to keep the Fleet in that position of sailing [...] that the Order of Sailing is to be the Order of Battle, placing the Fleet in two Lines of sixteen Ships each*".<sup>37</sup> This measure aimed at breaking through the enemy line; after the

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Blackwood, 14. October 1805.; Private Diary, 14. October 1805.; Nelson to Hope, 15. October 1805.; Nelson to Ball, 15. October 1805.; Nelson to Hamond [1], 15. October 1805.; Nelson to Collingwood [2], 18. October 1805.; Private Diary, 19. October 1805.; Memorandum, 20. October 1805.; Private Diary, 20. October 1805. See LDHN [http://www.wtj.com/archives/nelson/1805\\_10a.htm](http://www.wtj.com/archives/nelson/1805_10a.htm), ...1805\_10b.htm, ...1805\_10c.htm, ...1805\_10d.htm, ...1805\_10e.htm.

<sup>32</sup> In his letter to Castlereagh on the 1<sup>st</sup> of October, Nelson suggests to put the Congreve rockets into action: "*Even should no Ships be burnt, yet it would make Cadiz so very disagreeable, that they [the combined fleet] would rather risk an Action than remain in Port.*" Nelson to Castlereagh, 1. October 1805., see LDHN [http://www.wtj.com/archives/nelson/1805\\_10a.htm](http://www.wtj.com/archives/nelson/1805_10a.htm). That would have been the first naval deployment of this early tactical missile. On the 14<sup>th</sup> of October he wrote to Blackwood, that he expects "*three stout Fire-Ships*" from Britain, and he also mentioned the possible deployment of Congreve rockets. Nelson to Blackwood, 14. October 1805., see LDHN [http://www.wtj.com/archives/nelson/1805\\_10d.htm](http://www.wtj.com/archives/nelson/1805_10d.htm).

<sup>33</sup> 1 league = 3 nautical miles, so the distance of 3–4 leagues means cca. 17–23 km.

<sup>34</sup> Nelson to Duff, 4. October 1805., see LDHN [http://www.wtj.com/archives/nelson/1805\\_10a.htm](http://www.wtj.com/archives/nelson/1805_10a.htm).

<sup>35</sup> Robert Southey wrote the terms "*repeating ships*", see SOUTHEY p. 312.

<sup>36</sup> This intention is also supported by the written order of the 15<sup>th</sup> of October, to Captain George Hope, commander of the *Defence*, 74. See below and footnote 60.

<sup>37</sup> Memorandum, 9. October 1805., see LDHN

breakthrough Nelson's ships, raking the vessels stuck between the British lines, were to overpower the Franco-Spanish fleet. This was different from the everyday practice, what meant an artillery duel fought in a distance of about 200 meters, and this method was a culmination point of the evolution of the naval tactics in the age of sail.<sup>38</sup> Nelson's flexible leadership is lucidly demonstrated by the well-cited phrase in the Anglo-Saxon military historiography: the memorandum contains *guiding principles* only, and not exact orders. With the help of these guiding principles he sketched the outlines of the battle, leaving the tactical decisions to his subordinates.

A perfect example for this is, when he writes: "*the Second in Command [Collingwood] will in all possible things direct the movements of his Line*", practically giving Collingwood the freedom to decide in the following battle, or when he put down the following: "*no Captain can do very wrong if he places his Ship alongside that of an Enemy*".<sup>39</sup>

#### *The Franco-Spanish combined fleet in Nelson's Trafalgar papers*

As I have mentioned before, about 25 % of the Nelson-papers of Trafalgar contains information about the combined fleet. The data can be categorized into four main groups: the question of prize law, the possible plans of the Franco-Spanish fleet, the actions of the French squadron which broke out from the harbour of Rochefort, and the sailing of the combined fleet. The last three groups are closely connected to each other, so these are going to be the subjects of my investigations. The question of prize law will be mentioned only partially.

Only three Nelson-letters deal with the interception of neutral ships. In his letter to Castlereagh on the 1<sup>st</sup> of October, and in the report to Marsden on the 10<sup>th</sup> of October, he complains that laws restraining the prizing of neutral ships are jeopardizing the authority of the Admiralty, moreover, have a negative moral effect on the captains of the navy. In this way, the restrictions, directly and indirectly, support the enemy. One of the letters to

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[http://www.wtj.com/archives/nelson/1805\\_10c.htm](http://www.wtj.com/archives/nelson/1805_10c.htm). Nelson continues the above mentioned: „*with an Advanced Squadron of eight of the fastest sailing Two-decked Ships*". Nelson's aim was – as it turned out from the Cadiz memorandum – to separate Villeneuve from his van, and to trap him between his line and the mentioned advanced squadron. This part of Nelson's conception was impossible to carry out, because there were not enough ships of the line at his disposal.

<sup>38</sup> The failure of the line tactics laid in several factors of the rigid naval tactics (formalism), the inappropriate signal system and the traditional positioning of the ships in the line. (Usually the attacker occupied the windward side and got the initiative, while the defender stayed on the leeward, and had the possible of wearing and retreating.) For the origin and the fail of the line tactics particularly see TRACY pp. 52–76.

<sup>39</sup> Memorandum, 9. October 1805., see LDHN

[http://www.wtj.com/archives/nelson/1805\\_10c.htm](http://www.wtj.com/archives/nelson/1805_10c.htm). The most recent work on Nelson's tactics at Trafalgar, see CZISNIK, Marianne: *Admiral Nelson's Tactics at the Battle of Trafalgar*. History, October 2004. pp. 549–559.

Marsden on the 10<sup>th</sup> of October, concretely mentions a captain in this subject, named William Hoste, who was a protégé of Nelson.<sup>40</sup>

Nelson's first remark about the intentions of the combined Franco-Spanish fleet can be found in his letter to Marsden, on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of October. Based on a gossip, that there was a food shortage in Cadiz, he speculated, that the combined fleet was sure to leave the port of Cadiz.<sup>41</sup> On the 5<sup>th</sup> of October, his report to Lord Barham reflects a much firmer conviction, namely he thought that the ships of the sail of the enemy "*mean to sail the first fresh Levant wind; and as the Carthagena Ships are ready [to put out to sea], [...] it looks like a[n intended] junction*".<sup>42</sup>

The background of this thought was provided by Blackwood, whose report informed Nelson on the 4<sup>th</sup> of October that the ships of the line of the combined fleet had been filled with troops, and have been ready to set sail.<sup>43</sup> What Nelson meant by "junction" is still unclear. Although, around the 8<sup>th</sup> of October he mentions to Major-General Stewart that "*Some day or other, that Buonaparte, if he lives, will attempt the invasion and conquest of Great Britain*",<sup>44</sup> but Nelson does not seem to be afraid of a possible invasion. Beside this, he must have known that Napoleon disassembled his camp at Boulogne (where the *Grand Armée* stood waiting for the invasion) and started marching towards the inland.<sup>45</sup> Considering that he mentioned the squadron of Cartagena, it is likely, that under the term "junction" he meant a military action aiming at the Mediterranean Sea and at Naples. For France, the Kingdom of Naples was a bridgehead to expand its interests to the Near East.<sup>46</sup> The following three letters also provide evidence for this. He writes to Blackwood, on the 9<sup>th</sup> of October: "*Agamemnon, Belleisle, and very probably London, are at this moment on their passage; therefore, if Mr. Decrès<sup>47</sup> means to come forth (if he would take my advice, which I dare say he won't), he had better come out directly; [...] and that if the Enemy are bound into the Mediterranean they would come out at night, which they have always done,*

<sup>40</sup> These letters: Nelson to Castlereagh, 1. October 1805.; Nelson to Marsden [1, 2], 10. October 1805. See LDHN [http://www.wtj.com/archives/nelson/1805\\_10a.htm](http://www.wtj.com/archives/nelson/1805_10a.htm), ... 1805\_10c.htm.

<sup>41</sup> Nelson to Marsden, 2. October 1805., see LDHN [http://www.wtj.com/archives/nelson/1805\\_10a.htm](http://www.wtj.com/archives/nelson/1805_10a.htm).

<sup>42</sup> Nelson to Barham, 5. October 1805., see LDHN [http://www.wtj.com/archives/nelson/1805\\_10b.htm](http://www.wtj.com/archives/nelson/1805_10b.htm).

<sup>43</sup> BEATTY <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/15233/15233-h/15233-h.htm>. According to Beatty's opinion, the aim of this manoeuvre was to lure Nelson closer to the port, by this means finding out the number of the British ships. As it is mentioned above, however, there is no sign of speculation in Nelson's letter to Lord Barham on the following day. Finally, the combined fleet withdrew to the inner harbour, fearing the development of the Congreve rockets. See TRACY p. 171.

<sup>44</sup> Nelson to Stewart, about 8. October 1805., see LDHN [http://www.wtj.com/archives/nelson/1805\\_10c.htm](http://www.wtj.com/archives/nelson/1805_10c.htm).

<sup>45</sup> KEEGAN p. 52. On the 25<sup>th</sup> of August, Napoleon told Talleyrand, that he gave up his invading plans for a time, see TRACY p. 165.

<sup>46</sup> TRACY p. 159. Dominating the Mediterranean meant not only the advantage of controlling the naval flank of the ground operations – and in this way the opportunity of surrounding the enemy through seaborne operations – but also controlling the land route to India, which was the key of the British positions and interests in the Far East.

<sup>47</sup> Admiral Denise Decrès was the French Minister of the Marine and the Colonies.



[...] run to the Southward, and catch the sea-breezes at the Mouth of the Gut, and push through [the Strait of Gibraltar] whilst we might have little wind in the offing."<sup>48</sup> On the next day he writes to Collingwood: "The Enemy's Fleet are all but out of the harbour – perhaps, this night, with the Northerly wind, they may come forth, and with the Westerly sea-breeze to-morrow go into the Mediterranean".<sup>49</sup> In his next letter to Collingwood on the same day Nelson writes: "and should it [the weather] turn bad, we may be forced into the Mediterranean, and thus leave them [the combined fleet] at liberty to go to the Westward, although at present I am sure Mediterranean is their destination".<sup>50</sup> All these letters imply that Nelson took every movement of the enemy into account and was capable of taking all circumstances into consideration. It is a good evidence for the fact, that Nelson did not underestimate his enemies: he treated them mentally equal. The feeling of anxiety is easily noticeable in the letters: Nelson feared that the combined fleet might slip into the Mediterranean Sea.

The above-mentioned facts show, that before the 10<sup>th</sup> of October the number of remarks about the enemies is relatively small in Nelson's letters. The reason for that is the distribution of provisions and water supplies, which required a great amount of organizing activity. By the 10<sup>th</sup> of October the question of the provisions was solved and the problem of the combined fleet became the dominant topic of the letters.

The most intense correspondence was triggered undoubtedly by the marauding Rochefort squadron.<sup>51</sup> It was on the 13<sup>th</sup> of October, when Nelson first learned about their appearance, as the following letter to Collingwood clearly demonstrates: "The Rochefort Squadron has been seen in Latitude 41° 43' near Oporto, with several Prizes with them. If they cannot get to Vigo I should not be [surprised] if they push for the Mediterranean, or try to get into Cadiz, unless they go into Lisbon. Upon looking at the chart I see they can get into Vigo. The Oporto Convoy is, I fear, taken, and Agamemnon and L'Aimable had a narrow chance".<sup>52</sup> On the same day the two ships met the British fleet in the Bay of Cadiz

<sup>48</sup> Nelson to Blackwood, 9. October 1805., see LDHN

[http://www.wtj.com/archives/nelson/1805\\_10c.htm](http://www.wtj.com/archives/nelson/1805_10c.htm).

<sup>49</sup> Nelson to Collingwood [1], 10. October 1805., see LDHN

[http://www.wtj.com/archives/nelson/1805\\_10c.htm](http://www.wtj.com/archives/nelson/1805_10c.htm).

<sup>50</sup> Nelson to Collingwood [3], 10. October 1805., see LDHN

[http://www.wtj.com/archives/nelson/1805\\_10d.htm](http://www.wtj.com/archives/nelson/1805_10d.htm).

<sup>51</sup> The Rochefort squadron set sail on the 16<sup>th</sup> of July under the command of Captain Zacharie Jean-Théodore Allemand. After failing to meet Villeneuve's fleet, returning from the Caribbean Sea, he entered the port of Vigo. The squadron (five ships of the line and three frigates) put to sea once again on the 18<sup>th</sup> of August, hoping to unite its forces with those of Villeneuve's in the entrance of the English Channel. After the captain realized, that due to the blockade of Cadiz, such mission is impossible, Allemand started to marauding in the eastern waters of the Atlantic. The Rochefort squadron returned to its starting point on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of December 1805. By that time, it spent 161 days marauding, captured three warships, several hundred prisoners and destroyed numerous merchant ships. See JAMES, William: *Naval History of Great-Britain. Vol. IV*. Richard Bentley, London, 1837. pp. 148., 150.

[http://www.pbeyon.plus.com/Naval\\_History/Vol\\_IV/Vol\\_IV\\_P\\_148.htm](http://www.pbeyon.plus.com/Naval_History/Vol_IV/Vol_IV_P_148.htm), .../Vol\_IV\_P\_150.htm.

<sup>52</sup> Nelson to Collingwood, 13. October 1805., see LDHN

[http://www.wtj.com/archives/nelson/1805\\_10d.htm](http://www.wtj.com/archives/nelson/1805_10d.htm).

unharméd. Nelson received a three day old report of Sir Edward Berry, captain of the *Agamemnon*, 64, about his encounter with the Rochefort squadron.<sup>53</sup> On the same day he sent this report to Marsden.<sup>54</sup> The day after, in a letter to Collingwood he mentions, that "*Africa did not see the Rochefort Squadron, but heard of them*".<sup>55</sup>

At this point, the question of the marauding Rochefort squadron and the problem of the combined fleet seem to be interwoven in Nelson correspondence for a short time. After this more and more emphasis is put on the movement of the combined fleet, right till the morning of the battle of Trafalgar. These were the last reports of Nelson.

The news of the break-out of the Rochefort squadron made Nelson to speculate about the intentions of the combined fleet. He presumed that if the combined fleet will not put out to sea soon "*I shall then rather incline to think they will detach Squadrons*", trying to force their way out of Cadiz that way.<sup>56</sup> To avoid this, in the same letter, he planned the deployment of Congreve rockets and fireships to force the combined fleet out of the port.<sup>57</sup> Moreover he expressed his expectations: "*we may (I hope) flatter ourselves that some of them will cruise on our side*".<sup>58</sup>

On the 15<sup>th</sup> of October Nelson informed the Governor of Malta: "*the combined Fleets are all at the Harbour's Mouth, and must either move up again, or move off*". The letter implies Nelson's intentions to get round to the battle as soon as possible, and to send to the Mediterranean Sea "*ten Sail of the Line, two Frigates, and two Sloops, off Toulon, Genoa, and [the] Coast [of Malta], to cover our Army and to prevent [the French shipping] along shore, and to save Sardinia*".<sup>59</sup> On the same day Nelson became aware of the position of the combined fleet, and he ordered Captain George Hope, on board of *Defence* (this sail was one of the repeating ships), to sail closer to Cadiz, as according to Captain Blackwood "*it seems [...] that a [French or a Spanish] Ship or two may attempt to drive the Frigates off*",<sup>60</sup> and in this case he could support them instantly.

On the 18<sup>th</sup> of October Nelson, referring to the problem of the Rochefort squadron, writes to Collingwood: "Sir Richard Strachan will either spoil their cruise or lock them up

<sup>53</sup> In his report, Berry gives detailed information about the chase, that was not infrequent at the speed of 17 knots. For the text of the report, see LDHN <http://www.wtj.com/arcdocs/f/nel1005b.htm>, footnote 14.

<sup>54</sup> Nelson to Marsden [3], 13. October 1805., see LDHN [http://www.wtj.com/archives/nelson/1805\\_10d.htm](http://www.wtj.com/archives/nelson/1805_10d.htm).

<sup>55</sup> Nelson to Collingwood, 14. October 1805., see LDHN [http://www.wtj.com/archives/nelson/1805\\_10d.htm](http://www.wtj.com/archives/nelson/1805_10d.htm). *Africa*, 64, at the time was *en route* to the British forces, anchored in the Bay of Cadiz.

<sup>56</sup> Nelson to Blackwood, 14. October 1805., see LDHN [http://www.wtj.com/archives/nelson/1805\\_10d.htm](http://www.wtj.com/archives/nelson/1805_10d.htm).

<sup>57</sup> See above, footnote 32.

<sup>58</sup> Nelson to Blackwood, 14. October 1805., see LDHN [http://www.wtj.com/archives/nelson/1805\\_10d.htm](http://www.wtj.com/archives/nelson/1805_10d.htm).

<sup>59</sup> Nelson to Ball, 15. October 1805., see LDHN [http://www.wtj.com/archives/nelson/1805\\_10e.htm](http://www.wtj.com/archives/nelson/1805_10e.htm).

<sup>60</sup> Nelson to Hope, 15. October 1805., see LDHN [http://www.wtj.com/archives/nelson/1805\\_10e.htm](http://www.wtj.com/archives/nelson/1805_10e.htm).

in Vigo".<sup>61</sup> On the next day he writes to Collingwood "it was the Rochefort Squadron that took the *Calcutta*",<sup>62</sup> then, referring to a captured French officer he claims that the enemy really attempted to intercept the *Agamemnon*, "but they fancied the Oporto and Lisbon Convoy were Ships of War. Four West Indiamen, some Whalers, and the *Calcutta*, with very few [ships] of the Lisbon Convoy, is the fruit of their cruise."<sup>63</sup> These are Nelson's last reports about the Rochefort squadron.

As it later turned out, Nelson's (and in fact Blackwood's) prediction was correct. The Franco-Spanish fleet stood out to sea, partly because of an attacking manoeuvre that was directed at the observer frigates. On the 17<sup>th</sup> of October Villeneuve learned that Admiral François Rosily arrived at Madrid five days before, so Napoleon intended to relieve him of his post, because of not leaving the port of Cadiz. As a response, he ordered Rear Admiral Charles René Magon to take a squadron of ships (seven ships of the line and a frigate) and intercept the enemy look-out ships on anchor in front of the harbour. The same day Villeneuve was informed that some time earlier a squadron of sails had left Nelson's fleet – the ships of the line of Rear Admiral Louis, escorting a convoy to Malta.<sup>64</sup> He considered the opportunity a fine one to leave the port. Finally, the whole combined fleet was put to sea the next day, on the 19<sup>th</sup> of October.<sup>65</sup>

The first signal was given by the frigate *Sirius* on the 19<sup>th</sup> of October, 7 o'clock in the morning. Through the system of repeating ships, the news of the combined fleet's movement reached Nelson in two and a half hours. As he puts in his diary: "at half-past nine, the *Mars* [...], repeated the Signal, »that the Enemy was coming out of Port«".<sup>66</sup> In fact, only Magon's squadron managed to be put to sea, but the wind calmed and the whole fleet got stuck in the mouth of the harbour. It was only on the next day when the combined fleet could leave the harbour.<sup>67</sup>

On the 20<sup>th</sup> of October, in his last letter to Lady Emma Hamilton, Nelson wrote: "In the morning, we were close to the Mouth of the Straits [of Gibraltar], but the wind had not come far enough to the Westward to allow the Combined Fleets to weather the Shoals off Trafalgar; [...] a group of them was seen off the Lighthouse of Cadiz this morning, [...] that I rather believe they will go into the Harbour before night."<sup>68</sup> This remark refers to the

<sup>61</sup> Nelson to Collingwood, 18. October 1805., see *LDHN*

[http://www.wtj.com/archives/nelson/1805\\_10d.htm](http://www.wtj.com/archives/nelson/1805_10d.htm).

<sup>62</sup> The *Calcutta*, 54, was captured by the French ship of the line *Magnanime*, 74, near Scilly, on the 26<sup>th</sup> of September, see *LDHN* <http://www.wtj.com/arcdocs/f/nel1005c.htm>, footnote 3. Particularly see JAMES pp. 147–150.

[http://www.pbenyon.plus.com/Naval\\_History/Vol\\_IV/Vol\\_IV\\_P\\_147.htm](http://www.pbenyon.plus.com/Naval_History/Vol_IV/Vol_IV_P_147.htm) – .../Vol\_IV\_P\_150.htm.

<sup>63</sup> Nelson to Collingwood, 19. October 1805., see *LDHN*

[http://www.wtj.com/archives/nelson/1805\\_10d.htm](http://www.wtj.com/archives/nelson/1805_10d.htm).

<sup>64</sup> KEEGAN p. 53.

<sup>65</sup> TRACY pp. 171–172.

<sup>66</sup> Private Diary, 19. October 1805., see *LDHN*

[http://www.wtj.com/archives/nelson/1805\\_10e.htm](http://www.wtj.com/archives/nelson/1805_10e.htm). For the time of the signal of frigate *Sirius*, see KEEGAN p. 53.

<sup>67</sup> TRACY p. 172.

<sup>68</sup> Nelson to Emma Hamilton, 20. October 1805., see *LDHN*

miscarried attempt of the enemy fleet to put to sea, by which it made itself very vulnerable against the British fleet. Nelson's manoeuvre, what directed his squadron to the mouth of the strait, aimed at preventing the combined fleet from reaching the Mediterranean Sea. His private diary is the evidence, that his manoeuvre was successful: "In the afternoon Captain Blackwood telegraphed that the Enemy seemed determined to go to the Westward; and that they shall not do if in the power of Nelson & Brontë to prevent them. [...]. At six o'clock Naiad made the signal for 31 Sail [sic!] of the Enemy N.N.E."<sup>69</sup> Nelson here – as he did it in his letter to Emma Hamilton – mentions the Franco-Spanish fleet, as if it were torn into two groups. This was the result of its miscarried attempt to leave the harbour: Magon's squadron and the main force of Villeneuve were not able to unite their powers on the open sea. Though the latter diary entry suggests to some extent that the combined fleet turned back towards Cadiz, it did not, as it can be learned from Nelson's last diary entry on the morning of the battle: "At daylight saw the Enemy's Combined Fleet from East to E.S.E.; bore away; made the signal for »Order of Sailing«, and to »Prepare for Battle«; the Enemy with their heads to the Southward; at seven the Enemy wearing in succession."<sup>70</sup> The last remark, however, gives information about Villeneuve's unexpected manoeuvre of trying to turn his fleet back to Cadiz.<sup>71</sup> Villeneuve, however, did not manage to reach the harbour, and the battle of the 21<sup>st</sup> of October 1805 resulted in a deciding victory of the British fleet, when 27 British ships defeated the combined fleet of 33 ships.<sup>72</sup>

### Conclusion

The above-quoted letter passages demonstrate Nelson's self-confidence in treating the intelligence about the enemy; it can be learned from most of his letters of the time of the Trafalgar campaign. He recognized the intentions of his enemy and positioned his ships in

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[http://www.wtj.com/archives/nelson/1805\\_10e.htm](http://www.wtj.com/archives/nelson/1805_10e.htm). Lady Emma Hamilton was the wife of Lord William Hamilton, the British Ambassador accredited to the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies. Nelson met the Ambassador and his wife for the first time in Naples, in the September of 1793. The beginning of Nelson and Lady Hamilton's love affair can be dated to the autumn of 1798. On the 21<sup>st</sup> of December 1798 Nelson, in order to save them from the French onslaught, moved Ferdinand IV and the royal family from Naples to Palermo, alongside the British diplomatic corps. For this deed, Ferdinand rewarded Nelson with the title of Duke of Brontë in August 1799. Nelson and the Hamiltons returned to Britain in July 1800, and they lived at Merton, Nelson's estate, purchased in October of 1801. See CALLO xxix–xxxii. (*Chronology*); TUNSTALL pp. 32., 70–73., 102–105.

<sup>69</sup> Private Diary, 20. October 1805., see LDHN

[http://www.wtj.com/archives/nelson/1805\\_10e.htm](http://www.wtj.com/archives/nelson/1805_10e.htm).

<sup>70</sup> Private Diary, 21. October 1805., see LDHN

[http://www.wtj.com/archives/nelson/1805\\_10e.htm](http://www.wtj.com/archives/nelson/1805_10e.htm).

<sup>71</sup> TRACY p. 181.

<sup>72</sup> For the most recent work in Hungarian about the battle of Trafalgar, see KRÁMLI Mihály: *A trafalgar csata, 1805. október 21.* (The Battle of Trafalgar, 21. October 1805.) *Hadtörténelmi Közlemények* (Quarterly of Military History), December 2004. pp. 911–961.

a way, which enabled him not only to remain unseen, but also to make more extended manoeuvres. Keeping a greater distance brought him the opportunity to react to the moves of the enemy quickly, either towards the Strait of Gibraltar (and the Mediterranean Sea) or towards the Atlantic Ocean.

Nelson's determined leadership is also verified by his attitude to the reports on the Rochefort squadron. As in the case of the efforts of the combined fleet to get to the Mediterranean, there is a sense of anxiety in Nelson's letters in connection with the problem of the Rochefort squadron. The five French ships of the line posed no real threat to Nelson's fleet at Cadiz, but threatened the ships that were under way to rendezvous with the British fleet (or back from there to Britain), as the relevant letters mention. Besides, the Rochefort squadron was a distracting factor in Nelson's manoeuvres.

The reports on the movement of Vice Admiral Villeneuve's fleet are testifying the effectiveness of Nelson's system of observing ships. The "look-out ships" were able to keep the sailed-out Franco-Spanish fleet under surveillance, even in those critical hours. Even Nelson himself comments with exaltation: "*The Frigates and look-out Ships kept sight of the Enemy most admirably all night, and told me by [night] signals which tack they were upon.*"<sup>73</sup> As an experienced mariner and commander, he understood the problems of the enemy and took them into account when planning operations against them. His letter to Emma Hamilton, in which he foresaw that the combined fleet will turn back to the harbour, also testifies this, although this manoeuvre took place later.

One can see that Admiral Horatio Nelson possessed up-to-date information about his enemies in the campaign of Trafalgar and used the information wisely when leading the forces under his command. All these factors played an important role in his complete victory over the combined Franco-Spanish fleet at Trafalgar on the 21<sup>st</sup> of October 1805 – and in shattering Napoleon's endeavors to invade Britain.

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<sup>73</sup> Private Diary, 20. October 1805., see *LDHN*  
[http://www.wtj.com/archives/nelson/1805\\_10e.htm](http://www.wtj.com/archives/nelson/1805_10e.htm).



## *Fiume During The Napoleonic Wars (1797–1813)*

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### *Historical antecedents*

First it was Charles III (as a king of Hungary) who discovered the importance of Fiume and declared it a free port in 1717 together with Trieste. It was also him who initiated to build a land-road between Fiume and Károlyváros (Karlstadt). The aim of it was to create commercial relations towards the Carpathian basin.<sup>1</sup> After the peace of Pozsarevác in 1718, made with the Turkish, the king managed to fight out the right of free-trade with Levante for both towns.

The son of Maria Theresa, later Joseph II, came to study the eastern part of the Adriatic in 1775. Maria Theresa annexed Fiume to Hungary on his advice in 1776.<sup>2</sup> From the Croatian point of view the town's legal status was disputed from then on, although in the same year the town already had a Hungarian royal commissary, József Majláth who was later the first governor of Fiume. On Majláth's advice, the queen's new edict created the *Districtus Commercialis* (Commercial District), which includes, besides Fiume, Portoré<sup>3</sup>, Buccari<sup>4</sup>, Buccarizza and Novi ports as well.<sup>5</sup> The supervision of the district belonged to the governor and the Hungarian chamber according to the edict and this way distinguishing it from the military borderland. At the same time this district became the part of the newly organized Szörény county with Karlstadt<sup>6</sup> as the seat. It caused further legal complications as the county was part of Croatia. In 1778 the queen declared the above mentioned three smaller ports free coastal towns. The mentioned territories comprise the so called *Littorale Hungaricum* (Hungarian Littoral).

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<sup>1</sup> Fest Aladár: *Fiume Magyarországhoz való kapcsolásának előzményeiről és hatásairól*. [About the background and effects of annexation of Fiume to Hungary] In: Századok, 1916. 241. We don't share Fest's views that Charles III would do that Hungary had an own port. The Via Carolina was denominated after Charles. They started to build it in 1728 and completed it in 1771.

<sup>2</sup> Gonda Béla: *A magyar tengerészet és a fiumei kikötő*. [The Hungarian Marine and the Port of Fiume] Bp., 1906. 10.

<sup>3</sup> Recent Kraljevica in Croatia.

<sup>4</sup> Recent Bakar in Croatia.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.* 11.

<sup>6</sup> Recent Karlovac in Croatia.

Both the Croatian *sabor* (parliament) and the inhabitants of Fiume objected to the existent unclear legal situation. As a consequence Maria Theresa pulled out Fiume from Szörény county and annexed directly to Hungary as a "separate body annexed to the Hungarian holy crown" (*separatum sacrae regni Hungariae coronae adnexum corpus*) on 23rd of April, 1779. The previously mentioned small ports were annexed to Hungary in 1786, as the edict of Joseph II, belonging under the authority of the governor of Fiume.<sup>7</sup> According to archives, the ships of the Hungarian Littoral had frequent relations with other ports of the Mediterranean, Levante and "visited both India", too.<sup>8</sup>

### *The approaching frontline*

Until 1796 people in Fiume taught that the war would not reach them. Things became serious with the Italian campaign of Napoleon, when the French troops occupied the western ports of the Adriatic. In these towns there were consuls from Fiume, so the town could get information directly about the events. The inhabitants (mainly the merchants) were first terror-stricken when they got to know about the fall of port of the Papal State, Ancona. (There has been lively commercial connection between these towns since the Middle Ages.) Sándor Pászthory, the then governor, ordered immediately to strengthen Fiume.<sup>9</sup> Soon arrived the army from the Croatian borderland and they distributed arms to the inhabitants, too.<sup>10</sup> Until 1797 Fiume had never been attacked from the mainland, so this time too, they expected the offensive from the sea. The walls of the town had been knocked down beforehand therefore the town became vulnerable from the mainland. As the famous quadrilateral in North-Italy (Mantova, Verona, Peschiera, Legnano) was still standing, people calmed down after the first fright.

However, Montana fell in the beginning of 1797 (19<sup>th</sup> January), so there was an open way to Austria. The Hungarian Parliament ordered recruitment. Fiume, as a free port, had been exempt from giving recruits; however the Hungarian Parliament (which did not even enact by law that Fiume was annexed to Hungary) made the town give thirty recruits. Fiume did not resist, probably because of Pászthory, moreover gave twelve extra recruits.<sup>11</sup>

After the fall of Mantova, the High Command intended to transport some of the wounded to Fiume. The governor disapproved it due to accommodation problems. Unfortunately there is no information about the arrival of the wounded.

On the 8<sup>th</sup> of February, 1797, the French occupied Ancona again (this time permanently). Three ships of the papal fleet managed to escape before the occupation and take

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.* 17.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.* 19.

<sup>9</sup> Count Szapáry János was the Hungarian governor when the French Revolution broke out (1788–1791), he was followed by Pászthory Sándor (1791–1801).

<sup>10</sup> Fest Aladár: *Fiume az első napoleoni háború idejében*. [Fiume during the first Napoleonic Wars] Part I. In: A Tenger, 1912. 6.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.* 10.



refuge in Fiume where they arrived on 12<sup>th</sup> of February.<sup>12</sup> The town got into a panic but the measures taken by the leaders of the town and the governor calmed the people down. It was rumored that the French planned to set up brigantines (pirates) so they strengthened the port and the whole Austrian and Hungarian coastline according to the orders of the High Command. It is likely that Fiume then got a naval commander, captain *Sibson*, who was probably British. Many people escaped from the town. The leaders of the town, having been concerned about alimentation, asked the governor to ban grain export as Fiume had always suffered from starvation during wartime. The governor turned to the governor of Trieste for advice, then he rejected the idea.<sup>13</sup> (The Higher Command may have considered the alimentation of the army more important than that of the civilians.) After all, after March no commercial ships left the port.<sup>14</sup>

Meanwhile, the recruits were ordered to Zagreb, which touched the town keenly. They thought that if they had to give recruits even so it was not their duty, moreover they gave more, they could stay in the town for their own defence. It is no wonder that fourteen recruits escaped on the way to the Croatian capital.<sup>15</sup> The governor hoped, due to information received from “higher circles”, that the whole coastline would get help from the English from the sea. He had the information that the English fleet is stationed at the Southern Adriatic. He wrote a letter to Admiral *Tylor*, but received answer only from the consul of Zara<sup>16</sup> who let him know that the English are not in the area.<sup>17</sup>

Meanwhile, the French brigantines started their attacks: they occupied ships from Ragusa, Venice, Austria and Denmark. The governor of Trieste, *de Brigido*, called upon the citizens of the littoral to defend themselves the same way. However, everybody could do this on his own responsibility, without compensation. People could apply for a so called “pirate-letter” (*lettre de marque*, *Kapperpatente*), but there is no documentation about any.<sup>18</sup>

On the 22<sup>nd</sup> of March, 1797, the French troops occupied Trieste without firing a shot. The garrison stationed in the town, together with the army and some people from Trieste, receded to Fiume through Istria.<sup>19</sup> Meanwhile, reinforcement arrived in Fiume; the troops of major von *Koetz* from Hessendarmstadt. As a matter of curiosity, he was accommodated in János Balás’s inn which name was “To the three Moor” (*Zu 3 Mohren*).<sup>20</sup>

On the 21<sup>st</sup> of March, governor Pászthory relocated the governmental archives and bursaries of different offices to a safe place (Belovar) because of the approaching frontline. Then in a week (probably on the 28<sup>th</sup> of March) he also left his office.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.* 12.

<sup>13</sup> This time the imperial governor of Triest overlooked Fiume’s maritime affairs.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.* 11. and 15.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.* 17.

<sup>16</sup> Recent Zadar in Croatia

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.* Part II. 85–89.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.* 87–88.

<sup>19</sup> Connections between the merchant families of Trieste and Fiume were common.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.* 96.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.* 102–105.

*The first French occupation of Fiume (1797)*

It is known that colonel *Dagobert*, who occupied Trieste, and Pittoni, the leader of the escaping "Austrian" troops agreed to a 6-day ceasefire. *Fest* presumes that the ceasefire must have included the condition that Pittoni agreed to hand over Fiume without firing a shot. Otherwise it is incomprehensible why the town was not defended in spite of the preparations. The receding "Austrian" army arrived in Fiume on the 4<sup>th</sup> of April, where the starved and tired soldiers looted and insulted the citizens. Besides starvation and irritation it could have other reasons too but it will be dealt later. Pittoni's army, mainly Croats, the local garrison and the above mentioned troops from Hessen-Darmstadt crossed the River Fiumara, and stationed on the area of Sušak. Then they pulled down the bridge to build barricades.<sup>22</sup>

It has already been mentioned that the citizens of Ancona were continuously fleeing from the town. The magistrate (town-council) and the council, whose members were patricians and the local industry owners were brave enough to stay in the town. The town-council decided on sending a delegation to the French. The ambassadors were captured by the "Austrian" army and took them to the other side of the river and were to be court-martialled later with the charge of high-treason. The citizens tried to reason by shouting across the river but they got only gunshots as answer.<sup>23</sup>

The French troops entered the town on the 5th of April, 1797, in the late evening – *de facto* they entered the Hungarian territory for the first time during the war. *Luigi Perretti*, one of the magistrates, volunteered to meet them. *Fest* tells us about this meeting on the base of a later legend, which source was *Perretti's* grandson, who was a congressman of the town during the Reform Era in Hungary. According to the narration, colonel *Dagobert* said the followings to *Ferretti*:

*"You are Hungarian: I would like you to know that the French nation does not underestimate the Hungarian nation. You fight for the gallant Hungarian king; we fight for our honour. I give my word of honour and I swear in the name of my general, Bonaparte, that the citizens and their belongings will remain intact."*

No other source reinforces this legend, though it is proven that the French troops committed no incidents during the 4-day occupation. Fiume (unlike Trieste!) did not pay war indemnity either. *Fest* assumes that it might have been Napoleon's direct instruction; the French High Command might have dealt with Fiume as a Hungarian town. Comparing this assumption to a later proclamation (from 1809) to the Hungarians, it is thought-provoking. *Fest* adds that many people must have sympathized with the French and it might have been because of the common Latin (Italian/French) origin, "the lower classes' sympathy" for the republican ideas and finally because of the repelling behaviour of the Croatian-Austrian army.<sup>24</sup> If we take into consideration that the richest merchant of the

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.* Part III. 170.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.* 172–173.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.* 174–176.

town, *Lodovico Adamich*, (and the member of the town-council at the same time) had good French connections, we can presume that *Fest* was right.

Factories and storehouses (owned by citizens of Fiume) on the other side of the River Fiumara were foraged by the imperial army during the 4-day French occupation. Citizens tried to call upon the commander to regulate his soldier by shouting across the river but he said that he considered the citizens enemy! This foretold the later happened violent events. As *Fest* stated: “*The Croatians, whom the republican slogans could hardly affect because of the language difference and their underdeveloped culture, looked at the Italians in Fiume suspiciously from the very beginning.*”<sup>25</sup>

On the 10<sup>th</sup> of April the ceasefire was over. As the imperial army got reinforcement (mainly Croatians again) and the French did not, they decided on retirement. Expecting a potential retorsion from the imperial army, the town-council decided on distributing arms to the citizens. (Though, some of the citizens had been armed before.)

The imperial army returned that day. They looted and robbed the town and assaulted the citizens on the streets and in their homes. People from abroad were not exempt from the assaults. The remained documents prove that the town was dealt as a hostile area so the soldiers could loot freely.<sup>26</sup> It lasted for only one day because the imperial forces went after the French. The town could relieve.

Governor *Sándor Pászthory* returned to the town presumably in the middle of May. (*Fest* believes it was between the 9-18<sup>th</sup> of May.) The governor was loaded with complaints and cases of compensation right away. However, *Pászthory* (possibly under higher order) dealt with the problems simply, as the council made a mistake when it armed the citizens against the imperial army. The “compromise” was the following: “*all that were taken by the imperial royal Army and its officers on the 10<sup>th</sup> of April and the following days have to be considered as present.*” It was not enough. The council was also dishonoured when they included the following statement in the agreement:

“The Magistracy and the people of Fiume intend this general agreement to be a perennial certificate amongst the documents as an effective example and encouragement to our descendants, and in case of similar incidents – from which save us God– if they can’t overshadow us showing greater loyalty and love to the Dynasty, at least they should follow and imitate us.”<sup>27</sup>

Due to the peace-treaty of Campoformio in 1797 Venice, Istria and the majority of Dalmatia became part of the Habsburg Empire, which led to the recovery of the navigation of the whole empire. Dalmatia was overtaken “referring to the Hungarian kings’ ancient rights” by the Habsburg monarchs, that is why many people claimed in Hungary that the Hungarian Diet should have authority over the Dalmatian cases. The Court prevented that. The existing “unlawful” situation was discredited by many Hungarians until the

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.* 179.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.* 180–184.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.* 187–188.

World War I. It is also known that some Dalmatian towns (e.g. Spalato<sup>28</sup> and Makarska) urged to expand the Hungarian rule. The isle of Veglia in Quarnero made a similar application to the governor of Fiume. He forwarded it to the monarch and in his attached letter he called the monarch upon to keep his obligation that is to "annex the lost and recaptured Dalmatia."<sup>29</sup> However, the applications were not dealt with.

The wars – as always – were good for the grain trade of Hungary. In 1790 the traffic of the Hungarian Littoral shows a 21 per cent increase compared to that of the previous year. In 1791 eight-million-Forint worth of grain were transported to the imperial army stationed in Italy.<sup>30</sup> In 1800 similar amount of grain and other goods were taken to the Papal State, to the region of Piemont, Livorno and Portugal.<sup>31</sup>

In 1804 "a brigantine (merchant ship) set off from Fiume transporting Hungarian crops and handicraft goods of Hungarians towards west India."<sup>32</sup> The names of the merchants are unknown, the "Hungarian crops" are presumably grains and the contents of "handicraft goods" are unclear. The data listed by Aladár Fest show that the export (wine, wood, hemp) through Fiume went mainly to England, which might have increased the "desire for occupation".<sup>33</sup> According to Fest the majority of the grain transport was done by the company called *Dellazia & Brighenti* from Venice. Its agents were stationed in Fiume but the ships usually set off from Porto Ré.

Between 1803 and 1809 a road (road Louisa) was built to ease the transportation from the inland to the littoral. Lieutenant-general *Wukasovich* had authority over the project and it was almost ready when he died in action in the battle of Wagram. A Hungarian Commercial Company got the monopoly of the use of the road in 1797 and in 1810 the then French government reinforced it. (The leader of the company was *János Kiss*.)

The Napoleonic wars brought not only advantages but also disadvantages to the town even before the French entered it. The first investment of a port was accepted by Frances I in 1806, by Anton Gnamb's plans, but the necessary ingredient (the so called porcelain-clay) would have been imported from Tunis or from Italy (already under French occupation). It was impossible due to the existing circumstances. Minor works were started but they did not manage to finish them either.<sup>34</sup>

Strange but true that Maria Theresa annexed Fiume to Hungary in 1779 and the Hungarian States managed to pass a bill about it only in 1807 despite the fact that both them and the council of Fiume applied for it to the monarch many times. It was due to the Croatian *sabor's* (diet) fault-finding technique which interpreted even the most apparent royal

<sup>28</sup> Recent Split in Croatia

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.* 192.

<sup>30</sup> Gonda, *op. cit.* 19.

<sup>31</sup> Fest (1916) 260–261.

<sup>32</sup> Citation of unknown source in Král Miklós: *Magyar tengerészeti igazgatás*. [Hungarian Maritime Administration] Bp., 1905. 19.

<sup>33</sup> Fest, *op. cit.* 260.

<sup>34</sup> Jánossy Dénes: *Adatok a fiumei kikötő történetéhez (1776–1848)*. [Details to the history of the port of Fiume] In: *Századok*, 1924. 503.

rescripts to serve their own interests every time.<sup>35</sup> The article IV of 1807 ratified Maria Theresa's order to annex Fiume to Hungary, and in the same year article XXI gave the right to Buccari to send deputies to the Hungarian Diet.<sup>36</sup>

The reason why it happened in 1807 might have been to create a clear and lawful situation before the approaching French occupation. Fiume then had about 9000 inhabitants. In spite of the haste the peace treaty of Pozsony, in 1809, incorporated the whole Hungarian Littoral to the newly established "Illyrian Province" which leader was the governor of Laibach.<sup>37</sup>

### *The second French occupation (1809–1813)*

The second French occupation also came from the inland, this time from the south. General Marmont, the commander-in-chief of the Dalmatian French army, arrived in Fiume from Zara. This time Fiume was not defended at all. On the 28<sup>th</sup> of May, 1809, the French occupied the town and it had to pay Ft 460.000 war indemnity, moreover distribute food and ammunition. The town surrendered 100.000 right away. General Marmont hurried towards Trieste leaving troops in the town and keeping four patricians hostage to secure the payment of the war indemnity. Finally, they were allowed to go home on the 20<sup>th</sup> of August.<sup>38</sup> Klobusitzky József, the Hungarian governor<sup>39</sup>, left the town and in his post a mayor (maire) was placed who was appointed by the French government. According to the data of Aladár Fest, György Mailáth, who was delegating the Hungarian States, went to Fiume to hand over the town.<sup>40</sup>

There is only limited information about the 4-year French occupation. During this time a council having 22 members governed the town (under the close control of the French *maire*). One of the members was *Lodovico Adamich* who visited France, Spain and Turkey before 1809 presumably to do business.<sup>41</sup> The ship-traffic and so the commerce decreased dramatically these years. As the town was directly under French control, the Code de Commerce was introduced which meant the loss of the free port status. Duty had to be paid after the port traffic, moreover other state taxes were loaded on the town.<sup>42</sup>

<sup>35</sup> See Joó Gyula: *A másfél évszázados polémia Fiume birtokáért*. [The one and half century controversy for the possession of the port of Fiume] Budapest, 1942.

<sup>36</sup> Gonda, *op. cit.* 22.

<sup>37</sup> See Pándi Eszter (ed.): *Napóleon trianoni dekrétuma az Illir Tartományok megszervezéséről*. [Napoleon's decree in Trianon to organize the Illyrian Provinces] Documenta Historica Vol 48., Szeged, 2000.

<sup>38</sup> Susmel Ede: *Fiume története*. [A history of Fiume] In: A Tenger, 1915. 303.

<sup>39</sup> Klobusitzky was governor of Fiume between 1801 and 1809.

<sup>40</sup> Fest Aladár (1916) *op. cit.* 264. Count Mailáth György became the governor of Fiume between 1822 and 1823.

<sup>41</sup> Cvijetinović Starac, Margita: *Portreti iz fundusa Muzeja – Portraits from the holdings of the Museum. Pomorski i povijesni muzej Hrvatskog primorja Rijeka*. Rijeka, 1999.

<sup>42</sup> Susmel *op. cit.* 304.

*Béla Gonda* states in his book published in 1906 that "Napoleon recognized Fiume's favourable lay and commercial importance. He planned that if the Illyrian monarchy permanently consolidates, he would develop Fiume, not Trieste, into a commercial emporium."<sup>43</sup> It is not known what the source was of Gonda's idea. It seems to be an unfounded idea as a port is worth nothing if it is taken apart from the hinterland on which its commerce is based. And Fiume, as part of the Illyrian Province, could not have served its natural commercial district (the southern part of the Carpathian basin). A possible naval port can be taken into account, but it is also unlikely because of the bad lay of the port. It is proven though, that the French built nothing in Fiume during the four-year occupation.

In 1813 the town was liberated from the inland by *Laval Nugent Westmeath* who was the leader of the imperial army and the French receded without fighting. Before that, on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of July, 1813, the English fleet bombed the port and all the ships embayed in the port were abolished.

### *Conclusion*

As it was demonstrated before, the Napoleonic French troops entered the Hungarian territory (in Fiume) *de facto* in 1797, *de jure* on 28<sup>th</sup> of May, 1809. The Italian speaking population of the town sympathized with the French, probably because of their Latin affinity and commercial relations.

The Habsburg imperial army could not defend Fiume, later on they were unwilling to do so, moreover the town was considered as a hostile area. The cause of this was not only the inhabitants' friendly attitude to the French, but the then developed Italian-Croatian collisions, which transformed into a Hungarian-Croatian conflict due to the legal situation. This accelerated the ethnic conflicts which appeared first in Fiume then in the Hungarian motherland.

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<sup>43</sup> Gonda *op. cit.* 22.

## *Neutral Ireland? Irish Political and Public Reactions to the Spanish Civil War*

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The Spanish Civil War is considered to be one of the most significant events in the inter-war period. Interestingly, the events between 1936 and 1939 reflect not only the formulation of power politics in Europe, but also the aims of the Irish<sup>1</sup> government in diplomatic terms. Irish participation in the Spanish Civil War attracted considerable attention recently. However, the Iberian events were not given primary importance in the history of Irish foreign policy. Anglo-Irish relations and the concept of Irish neutrality during and after the Second World War have been the key issues. Although it is a well-known fact in Irish historical circles that the overwhelming majority of the Irish population was supporting Franco because of religious reasons, other aspects such as the Irish government's adherence to non-intervention and the motivations behind it are mostly ignored. So I am inclined to think that it is worth examining the Irish reaction to the Spanish Civil War in its entirety; that is, paying attention to the curiosity of non-intervention as well. This is more than interesting as the "Irishmen were not, as yet, intervening in Spain; but few were neutral."<sup>2</sup>

In order to provide an insight into Irish public opinion, I based my research partly on the reports of contemporary Dublin-centred Irish daily newspapers, namely the 'conservative' *Irish Independent*, the 'republican' *Irish Press* and the 'liberal' *Irish Times*. All three took different stands on the Spanish Civil War. They showed great interest in Spanish events from the outbreak of the war and published news coverage and reports every day in the first one and a half year of the conflict. It was only after the end of 1937 that these became less frequent.

Irish public opinion as well as political circles may be classified into three groups: pro-Franco, pro-Republican, and those on the side of non-intervention. I am going to give an insight on Irish reactions to the Spanish Civil War via these groups. The first part of my study will focus on Franco's Irish supporters, describing the main tendencies that motivated the certain pro-Nationalist groups. The second part will be based on outlining pro-Republican Irish responses to the Spanish Civil War, presenting the special character of Irish republicanism as well. The third section is devoted to non-interventionists.

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<sup>1</sup> The official name of the country between 1922 and 1937 was the Irish Free State, then the Constitution changed it to Éire. The title of the prime minister changed similarly; in 1937 the President of the Executive Council became to be called Taoiseach.

<sup>2</sup> J. Bowyer Bell, "Ireland and the Spanish Civil War," *Studia Hibernica* 9 (1969), 149.

*The Irish Supporters of Spanish Nationalists*

Due to the tragic nature of news coming from Spain, the vast majority of the Irish public opinion sympathized with the Insurgents. The main reason for this was the fact that the articles and news coverage of the *Irish Independent* focused on the losses of the Spanish Church and clericals in general. The *Independent* was the organ of the nationalist Catholic middle-class, influenced by the ideas of the Catholic Church. With reference to the Spanish Civil War, the paper held a strict religious view and thus backed the Nationalist cause. It was appreciated in conservative circles abroad as well; an Englishman, for instance, wished to "pay special tribute to the *Irish Independent* for the line it had taken in the Spanish crisis [because] it has been as Christian as [British] Catholic newspapers. The *Irish Press* is rather more like the English papers, with the honourable exception of the *Daily Mail*"<sup>3</sup>. On the other hand, the supporters of the Republican side often criticized the motivation and attitude of the paper. The well-known IRA man from the War of Independence, Ernie O'Malley argued that "the action of the *Independent* is a political one. It has no regard for Spain"<sup>4</sup>.

There was no wonder that the stories of tortured nuns and burnt churches caused heavy religious anxiety among the overwhelmingly Catholic Irish population. Besides up-to-date reports, several series of articles were published in the *Irish Independent*. These dealt almost exclusively with the "Red menace"; the idealistic past of Spain ("IN WAR-TORN SPAIN – HISTORIC SALAMANCA VISITED"); or the "TRUTH OF SPAIN". The "Our Readers' Views" section of the paper contained lots of Spanish topics as well. For instance on 19 August 1936 it dealt with "THE RED TERROR IN SPAIN", while on 2 December 1936 it was published under the subtitle "IRELAND, SPAIN AND COMMUNISM". Similar series appeared after 22 September 1936 as well; this was "THE TRUTH ABOUT COMMUNISM". Its subtitle, "A FIERCE HATRED OF RELIGION" was very telling.

The supporters of General Franco comprised of all who alleged to "stand for the ancient faith and the traditions of Spain are behind the present revolt against the Marxist regime in Madrid."<sup>5</sup> Hence they were motivated by religious and not political factors in the first place. They regarded Franco as the defender of faith and religion. This is why the Irish Catholic Church also raised its voice on the side of the Nationalists both from the altars and in the Catholic press as well. Since there was no deep commitment towards democracy<sup>6</sup> within the Church, the clergy could not be convinced by reminding them of the official politics adopted by the Vatican. The Primate of All-Ireland, Cardinal MacRory had a major role in the establishment of the Irish Brigade, by suggesting the recruitment of an 'Irish crusade' to help Spanish Nationalists. On 21 September he urged medical aid for

<sup>3</sup> *Irish Independent*, 26 September 1936.

<sup>4</sup> Mike Cronin and John M. Regan, *Ireland: The Politics of Independence, 1922-1949* (London: Macmillan, 2000), 82.

<sup>5</sup> *Irish Independent*, 22 July 1936.

<sup>6</sup> Fearghal McGarry, *Irish Politics and the Spanish Civil War* (Cork: Cork University Press, 1999), 236.



Spain: "We should all pray for Spain and, if able to, we should all help from our purses, help her obtain war supplies – what I should say is medical supplies for her sick and wounded. I do not want to say anything about other kind of help. As Christians, if we are able, we should be prepared to render that help to her"<sup>7</sup>. Pastorals between 1936 and 1939 often referred to the events in Spain, always in favour of the Nationalists. A Galway priest, for instance, declared that "every man who fights for Caballero, Lenin, Trotzky, or Marx are fighting against Christ and for the devil"<sup>8</sup>.

The main reason for supporting the Insurgents was thus the defence of the faith, which was closely related to the exaggeration of the communist threat. As the biggest party of the Opposition, Fine Gael worded their fears, "Mexico yesterday, Spain today, Ireland tomorrow"<sup>9</sup>. The *Irish Independent's* readers' views were very similar to this; as one of them remarked, "Spain was a great Catholic country, but the communists had got a hold there: the same thing could happen in Ireland if the people were not careful"<sup>10</sup>. So the paper regarded the events in Spain serving as a "LESSON FOR IRELAND" because "they should burn into our very souls an abhorrence of Bolshevism in every shape and form. They should steel us to rigid determination to have no truck or truce with its crafty agents or its lying and insidious propaganda"<sup>11</sup>.

It was not only the growing power and influence of the Soviet Union that worried the Opposition, but more importantly the spread of certain communist ideas, including atheism. That is to say, Catholicism for the Irish – unlike many European states – did not stand for old, feudal concepts but was much more deeply rooted in their traditions and everyday lives. Nevertheless, Eoin O'Duffy overemphasized the "red menace" and the leader of the Irish government, Eamon de Valera recognized this. In his opinion the Communist threat was exaggerated even in 1932, when he came to power with Fianna Fáil. But since then, as he said, they had seen "a gradual waning of the little strength that communism had"<sup>12</sup> in the country. This is why the government did not bring anti-Communist measures in legislation.

Shared historical ties were also one of the most frequently cited arguments for the pro-Nationalist side, going back as far as the Elizabethan era.<sup>13</sup> However, Alexander J. McCabe, the rector of the Irish College in Salamanca, despised the exaggeration of historical links between the countries; as he put it, "if some of the people on the side of Franco read the history of Ireland from the days of O'Connell, Davis and Davitt they would regard us as very red"<sup>14</sup>. This is an argument to consider, as McCabe was closely

<sup>7</sup> *Irish Press*, 21 September, 1936.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 1 March 1937.

<sup>9</sup> J. Bowyer Bell, "Ireland and the Spanish Civil War," *Studia Hibernica* 9 (1969), 145.

<sup>10</sup> *Irish Independent*, 25 September, 1936.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 14 September, 1936.

<sup>12</sup> Dermot Keogh, *Ireland and Europe, 1919-48* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1988), 78.

<sup>13</sup> Namely, after the Battle of Kinsale the Catholic Irish intelligentsia and nobility under the leadership of Hugh O'Neill fled from the Protestant English rule to Spain and found political asylum there. See Judith Keene, *Fighting for Franco. International Volunteers in Nationalist Spain during the Spanish Civil War, 1936-39* (London: Leicester University Press, 2001), 116.

<sup>14</sup> Keogh (1988), 71.

related to the heavily anti-Republican Irish Christian Front (ICF); his statement that “thanks to Hitler, the Communists were driven back from Germany, thanks to Mussolini they were kept from Italy, and thanks to Franco, they will never come to Ireland”<sup>15</sup>, clearly illustrates his attitude. Despite this he still managed to word his opinion without bias. In addition to shared historical ties, the supporters of Nationalists (in this case, a Fine Gael member) often referred to the crusades and compared them with the Irish Brigade, saying that “there was no difference between the young Irishmen who at present go to fight for Christianity in Spain and the Crusaders who went from all over Europe to fight for Christianity in the Holy Land”<sup>16</sup>.

The most significant Irish supporters of the Insurgents were the members of the semi-Fascist Blueshirt organization<sup>17</sup> on the one hand and the Irish Christian Front (ICF) on the other. But as they had different opinion for the nature of the help for the Spanish, the pro-Nationalist Irish population was far from being united for the cause. What is more, the Blueshirts themselves were also split on the eve of the Spanish Civil War<sup>18</sup>. According to Ned Cronin, the leader of the League of Youth, “the Irish Brigade [had] as much prospect of reaching Saragossa as it [had] of reaching the moon”.<sup>19</sup> So it was not surprising that Cronin also tried to organize Irish support for Spanish Nationalists, although he imagined a different kind of help. He “suggested the formation of a national fund [...] to provide medical aid and other assistance for the Spanish rebels, so far as such assistance was not rendered impossible by the ‘non-intervention’ pact”<sup>20</sup>. So it was more similar to the aims of the ICF than to O’Duffy’s.

In addition to the conflict with Cronin, O’Duffy and his Blueshirts’ relationship with Patrick Belton’s ICF<sup>21</sup> was neither unclouded. The latter body was organized after the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War in order to “help the stricken people of Spain in their struggle against the forces of international communism”<sup>22</sup>, but according to Stradling, “they had nothing to do with Spain but aimed to initiate and co-ordinate anti-communist

<sup>15</sup> *Irish Independent*, 26 October, 1936.

<sup>16</sup> Keogh (1988), 84.

<sup>17</sup> In the early and mid-thirties, the Free State – similarly to the majority of European states – also witnessed the emergence of extremists, though to a much smaller extent. The pro-Fascist O’Duffy, after he was dismissed from the leadership of the Garda Síochána (the Irish police force), joined the Army Comrades Association (ACA, later renamed to the National Guard, NG, and afterwards to the League Of Youth) and turned the body into a proto-Fascist, military group, who were publicly known as the Blueshirts. Inspired by Mussolini and the Italian Marcia Su Roma, in August 1933, O’Duffy organized a public meeting and a march which would have passed the Irish parliament buildings. In the end it was banned and the NG was proscribed. So the Blueshirts represented only a minor section of the right-wing ‘opposition’ (they were not yet present in the Dáil), but surprisingly enough, they were the ones to participate in the Spanish Civil War.

<sup>18</sup> As a result of the Blueshirt-split, two groups emerged; one under the leadership of Ned Cronin (League of Youth), the other led by Eoin O’Duffy, called the National Corporate Party (NCP).

<sup>19</sup> Robert Stradling, *The Irish and the Spanish Civil War, 1936-39* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), 12.

<sup>20</sup> *Irish Times*, 22 August 1936.

<sup>21</sup> The ideology of the movement was based on anti-Communism and corporatism.

<sup>22</sup> *Irish Independent*, 22 August, 1936.

activity in the Free State"<sup>23</sup>. Stradling's opinion is closer to that of the left-wing republican contemporaries of Belton. They declared that "the so-called Christian Front is a disguised Fascist organization, a puppet of the *Independent* newspaper trust and is in underhand league with General O'Duffy and his Fascist party [and] that this combination [...] is shamelessly and recklessly trying to use the name of religion to further the rise of the discredited Fascist groups in Ireland"<sup>24</sup>. So they may be considered significant in terms of domestic policy as Belton wanted to use his organization most importantly against the Irish government. However, Belton's republican/socialist contemporary, Peadar O'Donnell argued that Belton gave his movement "some touch of a non-political appearance"<sup>25</sup>.

The ICF did not approve of O'Duffy's plans about military intervention into Spanish affairs; Belton rather fancied humanitarian aid. Thus collections were organized on Sundays after masses, as a result of which more than £ 30,000 was raised, solely on 25 October, 1936.<sup>26</sup> In terms of public support, the movement can be considered as a success but not regarding its main objective, since they managed neither to introduce corporatism in Ireland, nor to make the de Valera government abandon their non-intervention policy. The *Irish Independent* always commented positively on the ICF; regarded their meetings of 15 November 1936 in Limerick and Roscommon as "magnificent demonstrations"<sup>27</sup>.

The leader of the military supporters of General Franco was Eoin O'Duffy. Both his contemporaries<sup>28</sup> and many historians<sup>29</sup> had a low opinion on him, and his role at the birth of the Irish Free State, his active work as Garda Commissioner and his achievements in Irish sports life as the head of the Gaelic Athletic Association have been neglected.<sup>30</sup> Several factors motivated O'Duffy to organize the Irish Brigade. Stradling, by stressing the concept of crusades, states that the Brigade was not brought into existence for political reasons but for defending Catholic faith.<sup>31</sup> O'Duffy himself also declared that he had "ceased all social and political manifestations, and [had] concentrated on one thing alone – on helping the cause of Christian Spain"<sup>32</sup>. In contrast, Augusteijn lists other factors as

<sup>23</sup> Stradling (1999), 12.

<sup>24</sup> *Irish Press*, 16 September 1936.

<sup>25</sup> Peadar O'Donnell, *Salud! An Irishman in Spain* (London, 1937), 240.

<sup>26</sup> On the subject of donations, funds, and the collected sums, see Keogh (1988), 72-77.

<sup>27</sup> *Irish Independent*, 16 November 1936.

<sup>28</sup> A Swiss journalist called O'Duffy 'marionett-like', the *Round Table* correspondent described him as 'our Irish Don Quixote', while in Salamanca he was considered as the 'queer fellow'. See Keene (2001), 115.

<sup>29</sup> Hugh Thomas refers to the Brigade as „O'Duffy's ill-fated blue shirts", while Mark Cronin calls their intervention as a „comical excursion to Spain". See *ibid*.

<sup>30</sup> On the relationship between Blueshirts and sports, see Mike Cronin, "Blueshirts, sports and socials," *History Ireland* 2/3 (1994): 43-47. Here the author stresses the importance of the movement as a social mobilizing force.

<sup>31</sup> Stradling (1999), 109.

<sup>32</sup> *Irish Independent*, 21 November 1936.

well that could make O'Duffy assemble his volunteers.<sup>33</sup> These include his commitment to fascism<sup>34</sup> but first and foremost his marginalization in Irish politics.

The most common reasons for volunteering in the Brigade were anti-communism, religious sentiments, fascist ideology or spirit of adventure. Gertrude Gaffney, the reporter of the *Independent*, provided an idealized picture of them when she alleged that "85% of them went because they thought it was up to them to fight for the Faith"<sup>35</sup>. In the end an Irish brigade of 670 members joined the Spanish Nationalist Army. They formed the Fifteenth Bandera (Battalion) of the Tercio (Foreign Legion), which lay under the leadership of Yagüe. The Brigade had its own officers, cooks, doctors, priest, Spanish adjutants, and interpreters. They all were under the direction of O'Duffy, who was appointed as Inspector-General, owing responsibility only to Franco. The recruitment began soon after the General's proposal of 10 August; the first office in charge was opened on 15 August in Cashel and was followed by many others.

The majority of volunteers were from a rural background, both from the Free State (Tipperary, Kerry, Limerick, that is the middle- and south-western counties) and the Catholic population of the Six Counties (Longford, Monaghan and West-Belfast).<sup>36</sup> Not all of them were Blueshirts; some came from a republican or even a worker background. Though many of them said that they were free from political motives, they admitted feeling hostility towards Fianna Fáil and the IRA.<sup>37</sup> About one third of them came from farmer families; in addition the number of former soldiers and gardai.

Problems arose later because of the inadequate leadership of the Brigade. This was because O'Duffy appointed almost exclusively his own men that were faithful to him: Patrick Dalton as field commander, Sean Cunningham as second in command, Tom Hyde as commander with himself and the anti-Semitic Thomas Gunning as his secretary. The latter was the only one to speak Spanish among them.<sup>38</sup>

The Irish volunteers were to face other difficulties before action as well. Firstly, they did not manage to embark on 16 October, 1936 near Waterford, owing to the work of the Non-Intervention Committee. Only later in mid-October did 700 volunteers left from Galway. The *Irish Press* gave an account of O'Duffy leaving Dublin with 40 of his men on 21 November, while due to the *Independent* "50 MORE IRISHMEN [WERE HEAD-ING] FOR SPAIN". The latter reported the departure of another 84 volunteers on 28 November, all of whom "were presented with miraculous medals, Sacred Heart badges, and prayer books"<sup>39</sup>. Another considerable-sized group (according to the *Irish Independent*, with 693 members<sup>40</sup>) left on 13 December, again from Galway on the board of the German *Domingo*. The military training of the Irish Brigade took place in Cáceres, where

<sup>33</sup> Joost Augusteijn, *Ireland in the 1930s: New Perspectives* (Dublin: Four Courts, 2001), 126-7.

<sup>34</sup> On 10 August, 1936 he made the following statement to the *Independent*: „If these atrocities are carried out in the name of democracy, than the sooner fascism triumphs, the better.”

<sup>35</sup> Stradling (1999), 52.

<sup>36</sup> Keene (2001), 119.

<sup>37</sup> Augusteijn (1999), 132.

<sup>38</sup> Keene (2001), 121.

<sup>39</sup> *Irish Independent*, 28 November 1936.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid*, 14 December 1936.

they stayed till February 1937. Here they attended mass every Sunday; this piousness astonished local people as this was very different from the attitude of the Spanish soldiers. Besides the disappointment with the nature of devoutness in Spain, several other factors made their presence in Cáceres more difficult. In addition to language problems, they had to face other difficulties as well. As a volunteer from Kerry said, they "were given no decent food or clothing and received hard bread and black coffee each day"<sup>41</sup>. However, alcohol caused the greatest difficulties. The Irish consumed too much wine which they were not used to, as a result they got drunk very often and this outraged the majority of the Spanish<sup>42</sup>. Gaffney, the reporter of the *Independent* commented on the question of alcohol from a different angle: in her opinion heavy drinking was not at all typical among the volunteers of the Brigade, as the Irish did not like wine in particular, and beer on the other hand was quit expensive, though.<sup>43</sup> In addition, they were not impressed by bull-fights, could not get used to siestas,<sup>44</sup> and complained of boredom as they had been still before action.

After the training in Cáceres the Bandera was sent to the Jarama front, where they arrived on 19 February 1937, after 26 hours on train instead of the expected 5 hours. They left for Ciempozuelos from Valdemora on that very day. At Ciempozuelos they found themselves in a gun-battle with Falangists from the Canary islands. The fatal misunderstanding demanded the lives Tom Hyde and Dan Chute.<sup>45</sup> In the *Irish Press*' report the incident is referred to as "Irish Brigade loses in action"<sup>46</sup>, while in the *Independent* it appeared under the headlines "TWO IRISHMEN KILLED. BRIGADE'S LOSSES AT MADRID"<sup>47</sup>. The latter news does not suggest the volunteers' military defeat.

The Irish Brigade fought their first battle at Titulcia on 13 March. Though they did not manage to capture the town, three Irishmen died in action. Afterwards they were called back to Ciempozuelos but were ordered to go back into action next day. However, O'Duffy refused this order but interestingly this was not sanctioned. They were moved to the La Maranosa sector on 23 March, where there was no active fighting. The most annoying inconveniences there were the lack of proper drinking water, continuing attacks of the Republican artillery, and according to volunteer McCullagh, "there was no tea, whiskey, or humour".<sup>48</sup>

The link between the *Irish Independent* and O'Duffy's brigade had been obvious from the outbreak of the war. The paper, for instance, had a reporter (Gertrude Gaffney) sent to the Brigade in the Spanish Cáceres. Gaffney was privileged as the reporters of the *Irish Times* and the *Irish Press* were not given permission to approach the members of the Ban-

<sup>41</sup> *Irish Times*, 23 June 1937.

<sup>42</sup> The drinking habits of the Irish volunteers shocked Spaniards. McCabe (quoted by Keogh (1988), 82.) puts this down to the fact that „in Ireland people take a lenient view of drunkenness and a rigid view about sexual excesses. On the whole the reverse is exactly true in Spain”.

<sup>43</sup> Stradling (1999), 53.

<sup>44</sup> Keene (2001), 122.

<sup>45</sup> Augusteijn (2001), 135.

<sup>46</sup> *Irish Press*, 24 February 1937.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>48</sup> Augusteijn (2001), 138.

dera.<sup>49</sup> In addition, Eoin O'Duffy also favoured the *Independent* in many respects; it was not only once mentioned in the *Irish Press* that "the General had no statement to make",<sup>50</sup> unlike in the case of the *Independent*. His letter to recruit volunteers for his 'crusade' was published here on 10 August 1936 and on 21 November 1936 his message about their aims ("TO FIGHT IN DEFENCE OF CATHOLICISM") was also an exclusive cover in the paper. Furthermore, his activities including his trips to Spain and the process of recruiting were also reported in details. As for the aim of the Brigade, the spokesman of O'Duffy's recruiting office summarized that it was to "help to put down Communism in Spain" and to do so, there was an urgent need "for the breaking-off of all trade and diplomatic relations [with the Spanish Republic] until the communist tyranny is ended"<sup>51</sup>. The paper exaggerated the significance of the Brigade in Spanish matters; for instance, when on 31 October 1936 the headline was "GENERAL FRANCO THANKS IRELAND-GRATEFUL FOR AID"<sup>52</sup>, the act itself meant much less in practice than the news suggested. Then the fact that on 15 March 1937 the Brigade was reported to have won Madrid Battle<sup>53</sup> was much more of an overstatement. The *Independent* backed O'Duffy and his men (referred to the group as "O'Duffy and his great warriors"<sup>54</sup>) till the end despite the criticism – later even of other pro-Nationalist groups – against them.<sup>55</sup> Even their arrival back in Dublin was commented with warm welcoming words. Rumours began circulating as soon as the beginning of April<sup>56</sup>. These were not without all foundations, as O'Duffy adhered himself to the six-month plan, which could not have been extended without difficulties due to the Non-Intervention Act of February 1937.<sup>57</sup> Both the Irish<sup>58</sup> and the Spanish staff found the Bandera's return to Ireland a reasonable idea. First they travelled to Cáceres, then to Lisbon by train on 17 June, and in the end they sailed to Dublin on the Mozambique. Welcome plans for the Brigade were published in the *Independent* two days before their arrival<sup>59</sup>. In the end 633 volunteers arrived on 21 June<sup>60</sup> and

<sup>49</sup> Stradling (1999), 229.

<sup>50</sup> *Irish Independent*, 19 September and 28 November 1936.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 13 August 1936.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 31 October 1936.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 25 March 1937.

<sup>54</sup> *Irish Independent*, 27 August 1936.

<sup>55</sup> Fine Gael, under the leadership of William Cosgrave, and the Irish Christian Front (ICF) led by Patrick Belton.

<sup>56</sup> 29 April 1937.

<sup>57</sup> Bell (1969), 157.

<sup>58</sup> O'Duffy in his letter to General Franco (9 April, 1937) asked for the exemption of his men.

<sup>59</sup> *Irish Independent*, 18 (under the subtitle "Call to the Public") and 19 June 1937. What is more, the paper devoted a whole page to the repatriation on 22 June 1937. The headlines, "DUBLIN WELCOMES THE IRISH BRIGADE" and "MEMORABLE RECEPTION" were undoubtedly overstatements.

<sup>60</sup> *The Irish Press* gave an exact figure of the number of volunteers to be expected and also of other details of their arrival. However, the attention of the paper focused on de Valera's electoral campaign tour in the country. See *Irish Press*, 18 June 1937.

were received in silence<sup>61</sup>, because – according to the French chargé d'affaire, François Brière – they were expected to fight on till the end.<sup>62</sup> The signs of unity and solidarity were not perceived: the volunteers split and left the harbour in two groups.<sup>63</sup> This appeared in the news of the *Irish Times* under the headline “THE SPLIT IN THE BRIGADE”. The volunteers informed the reporter that their mission was only a political campaign and that they “never saw the Reds”. They also expressed their disappointment to the correspondent of the *Irish Press* to whom they told, “there was neither religion nor education in Spain”. The discontent with the leadership also seemed evident from the volunteers’ remarks: “the responsibility for the loss of our national prestige rests with General O’Duffy and a few of his officers”<sup>64</sup>. The *Independent* did not mention such issues, though.

Practically the Irish Brigade did not contribute to Franco’s victory and the General “spent much more on maintaining the Irish Brigade in Spain than he ever received back”<sup>65</sup>. Due to the report of the Irish envoy accredited to Spain, Leopold Kerney, on the Irish Brigade, by May 1937 “O’Duffy seemed to have completely lost credit with Franco, who [then] looked upon him as a bluffer if not a duffer”<sup>66</sup>. Nevertheless, he stood up for them till the moment when it turned out that they were of no use. Then there were no more historical ties or shared sentiments; the Irish were considered only as undisciplined soldiers who were to receive their punishment and needed to be got rid of as soon as possible.<sup>67</sup> O’Duffy never admitted that his Brigade failed.

### *The Irish supporters of Spanish Republicans*

The most dominant figure of pro-Republicans in Ireland was Frank Ryan. As he was far from being anti-clerical, religion was never neglected in his life; he stood for and symbolized the radical Catholic/republican<sup>68</sup> tradition. This is why Ryan and his fellow republicans developed good relationship with the Basques, who were well-known religious Catholics. José Aguirre, the leader of the Basque Nationalist Party had a high opinion on the religious attitudes of the Irish, as he argued, they wanted “a poor church preaching real Christianity”<sup>69</sup>, just as they saw it in Ireland.

<sup>61</sup> The report of the *Irish Press* contradicts this as due to that „the route was flanked by thousands of people, some of whom cheered the Volunteers.” See *Irish Press*, 22 June 1937.

<sup>62</sup> Keene (2001), 127.

<sup>63</sup> Horan led one group, Sean Cunningham the other.

<sup>64</sup> *Irish Press*, 22 June 1937.

<sup>65</sup> Keene (2001), 128.

<sup>66</sup> Quoted by Keogh (1988), 92.

<sup>67</sup> Keene (2001), 129.

<sup>68</sup> By ‘Republicans’ in the Irish context I mean the opponents of the Anglo-Irish Treaty of 1921 which divided the island and brought the Irish Free State into existence.

<sup>69</sup> Keogh (1988), 79.

Officially the Republican Congress (RC)<sup>70</sup> and the Communist Party of Ireland (CPI) backed the Spanish Government. The Irish left first sent George Gilmore to Spain in order to gain a clearer picture of the Spanish situation and to decide what kind of help may be the most useful for Republicans. After he got injured, Ryan took over his duty and started to recruit volunteers. Few of them were actually Communist; they did not regard the civil war in Spain as a struggle between god and atheism but that between democracy and fascism. Nonetheless the situation was more than complex as trade unions and local councils condemned red atrocities<sup>71</sup>, the Workers Party was not at all concerned with Marxist or communist ideology, and their leaders felt strong antipathy towards socialism. The only Labour member to mention the war in Spain was William Davin, who – surprisingly enough – “urged the Irish government to protest against the anti-clerical atrocities”<sup>72</sup>. The illegal IRA neither supported the cause of the Spanish Republic; they prohibited his members from volunteering by saying that their help is needed in Ireland (i.e. in the North).<sup>73</sup> Suggestion was made towards General O’Duffy as well, using the same argument “VOLUNTEERS NEEDED IN BELFAST MORE THAN IN SPAIN”<sup>74</sup>. Referring to the War of Independence and the Irish Civil War was a common phenomenon for all sides that were interested in the Spanish crisis. What is more, some historians also tend to explain Irish interest in the Spanish Civil War with the continuation of the Irish Civil War. As Cronin remarked, “the Spanish Civil War provided an opportunity for Italians and the Irish left to fight their civil wars on Spanish soil”<sup>75</sup>.

Thus the legacy of the Civil War in Ireland was made itself felt in connection with the Spanish Civil War as well. Both pro-Nationalists and pro-Republicans referred to the heroes of 1916 and used the events of 1916-23 – including Partition – as arguments verifying their moves in the Spanish Civil War. According to Peadar O’Donnell, the co-founder of the RC, the *Irish Independent* (the leading voice of the pro-Franco campaign) was “conducting a vicious campaign against the Irish people [...] in 1916, when it denounced that Connolly<sup>76</sup> be executed; and 1922 when it denounced republicans and pushed for acceptance of the Treaty. [...] It was the dirtiest kind of yellow journalism”<sup>77</sup>. Frank Ryan,

<sup>70</sup> The non-militant Republican Congress (RC) was founded by ex-IRA men Frank Ryan, Peadar O’Donnell and George Gilmore, and was supported mostly by radical socialists and former members of the IRA. The main difference between the programmes of the RC and the IRA was that the former placed social reform above the fight against the Treaty. So the greatest challenge for the Irish left was – in addition to the lack of public support – the lack of cooperation among left-wing groups. The ban of the IRA in June 1936 made their situation even more difficult.

<sup>71</sup> The *Irish Independent*, the well-known supporter of Nationalists, congratulated to the Irish Labour Party and the trade unions for not dealing with ‘the case of the left’. See *Irish Independent*, 8 September 1936.

<sup>72</sup> *Irish Independent*, 13 September 1936.

<sup>73</sup> Bell (1969), 152.

<sup>74</sup> *Irish Press*, 27 August 1936.

<sup>75</sup> Cronin (2000), 84.

<sup>76</sup> The Socialist James Connolly, as one of the leaders of the Easter Rising, was executed by the British on 12 May 1916.

<sup>77</sup> Cronin (2000), 82.



journalist and leader of the Irish volunteers of the International Brigades, also often referred to the *Independent's* 'treason' in 1922. In his article on the bombing on Guernica – which is not signed but is attributed to him – he again referred to "the *Independent's* ramp as compared with its stand in 1916 and 1922 on the 'executions' [...]"<sup>78</sup>. In addition to this, Ryan compared also the Church's attitude towards Spain and its stand in their Civil War. He argued, "when the Catholic clergy in Spain identify themselves with the Fascist rebellion against the people, it appears to me that [they] turn the churches into barracks, and just as I saw no legitimate reason why the Cosgrave government here should be supported by the Irish bishops in the war 1922-23, so I do not see a legitimate reason why the Spanish monarchy or Spanish fascists should be supported by the Spanish bishops today"<sup>79</sup>. On the other hand the *Independent* was outraged that "the dead who died for Irish freedom would turn in their graves at the suggestion that Irish republicanism is to be compared with Spanish anti-God Communism"<sup>80</sup>. So the paper was careful not to alienate 'old-line' Republicans.

Irish volunteers joined the International Brigades as well, which were set up with the help of the Comintern, on the basis of the French communist Thorez's idea.<sup>81</sup> Altogether 35,000<sup>82</sup> volunteers fought on this side, never more 18,000 at a time. The Irish, all of whom were alleged to have "experience of warfare in Ireland"<sup>83</sup> were placed into the British Battalion. The Brits were led by a former Black and Tan, Captain George Nathan, who had also been the member of the Dublin Castle Murder Gang in the Anglo-Irish War. His past made it difficult to get on well with the Irish unit<sup>84</sup>, thus later he was replaced by the Irish Kit Conway. However, the actual leader of the Irish was Ryan, who happened to be an experienced journalist (the co-editor of the republican *An Phoblacht*). But as he was not a convinced communist, he was not trusted by the leadership of the Brigades.<sup>85</sup> It was in April 1938 that he was captured at the Aragon front and was not released until 1940.

The Irish supporters of the Spanish Government came mostly from big cities, with workers' background; as for their political beliefs, they were either IRA or RC members. Stradling refers to them as the "Communist Crusade", as opposed to the "Catholic Crusade" of the Irish Brigade. This was, however, far from being the real case, since pro-Republicans included idealists, intellectuals as well as adventurers, but the majority was motivated by anti-fascist beliefs. In addition, domestic political issues also contributed to the emergence of this Brigade. As the Blueshirts openly supported General Franco's side, this served as the main motivating force to fight against the Insurgents. Despite criticisms, the Irish members of the International Brigades were not anti-religious; Ryan himself also

<sup>78</sup> Cronin (2000), 111.

<sup>79</sup> Keogh (1988), 79.

<sup>80</sup> *Irish Independent*, 6 November 1936.

<sup>81</sup> Anthony Beevor, *A spanyol polgárháború* (Budapest: Európa, 2002), 263.

<sup>82</sup> Data concerning the number of volunteers vary according to sources. Compare Beevor (2002), 264, and Stradling (1999), 145.

<sup>83</sup> Stradling (1999), 160.

<sup>84</sup> In the end he was just as hateful for the Irish volunteers of the International Brigades as O'Duffy. See *ibid.*, 153.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, 160.

attended mass every Sunday while he was in Madrid (this of course was first-class propaganda at the same time, as Stradling highlights it).<sup>86</sup> Spanish Catholics were not at all as pious as Irish volunteers would have expected that; Peadar O'Donnell, writer and the co-leader of the RC on his visit to Spain observed that "Spanish Catholics do not seem to regard the Church with any of the awe so marked in Ireland. To them it is a sociable sort of place for talk as freely as in a café".<sup>87</sup>

The Irish team consisted of 150 republicans, 80 of whom left Dublin on 11 December. Their departure was reported in both the *Irish Press* and the *Irish Times*.<sup>88</sup> According to the *Times*, "the men left quietly and without any demonstration. 40 of them actually travelled on the same ship to Liverpool with General O'Duffy's volunteers".<sup>89</sup> Frank Ryan, their leader made a statement to the reporter of the *Irish Press*: "The Republican contingent besides being a very efficient fighting force, every member of it having been in action – is also a demonstration. It is a demonstration of sympathy of revolutionary Ireland with the Spanish people in their fight against international Fascism. It is also a reply to the involvement of Irish Fascism in the war against the Spanish Republic". He concluded by emphasizing, "We want to show that there is a close bond between the democracies of Ireland and Spain". This statement underlies the fact that Irish pro-Republicans were not thinking in terms of religion but democracy.

Altogether about 70 of them died in action, including the young poet, Charles Donnelly. Their base was appointed in Albacete, where international volunteers were trained. Here problems occurred in connection with oily food; dysentery was not uncommon among them. After training they moved to the village of Madrigueras, which was the centre of the XV Brigade (i.e. the British Battalion). The Irish and the British were put together because of linguistic reasons; this proved to be a serious mistake later on. The Irish were put into action already on 28 and 29 December, however, without success, since they could not take the village of Lopera. The Battle of Jarama was their first significant action, where the British Battalion stopped Franco's troops. The operations of 12-14 February were thus successful, but with losses: only 50 of the original 80 Irish volunteers stayed alive. In this battle the Irish were already split into two groups: the members of the Abraham Lincoln<sup>90</sup> and the British Government. The reason for the split was the disagreement with, and hostility towards British officers. The majority of the Irish volunteers, as former IRA-men, found it very difficult to follow the orders of an Englishman.<sup>91</sup> Ryan's New Years message, 'To all Irish Comrades' was intended to ease nerves; than he reminded everyone that Fascism is the main enemy and that the International Brigades cannot be divided by conflicts.<sup>92</sup>

<sup>86</sup> Ibid., 194.

<sup>87</sup> O'Donnell (1937), 23.

<sup>88</sup> Unlike the *Independent*, the *Irish Press* reported on Irish volunteers fighting on both sides in Spain.

<sup>89</sup> *Irish Times*, 14 December 1936.

<sup>90</sup> By the end of the battle of Brunete, July 1937, there had been hardly any Irish survivors left. See Stradling (1999), 172.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid., 153.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

The withdrawal of the International Brigades began after Negrín's speech of 21 September 1938. The Irish arrived back in Dublin on 11 November and the 44 returning volunteers were received by some 200 people at Molesworth Hall. The event did not have much press coverage in Dublin.

As far as the press was concerned, small socialist weeklies like *The Worker* and the *Irish Democrat* commented on Spanish events from the Republican point of view. After March 1937, Peadar O'Donnell became the editor of the latter, which guaranteed republican and socialist attitudes as he used to be the co-founder of the RC as well. Nevertheless, the low number of their circulation and their readers prevented them from gathering a considerable mass base for the Spanish Republic.

### *Non-interventionists*

The Irish government found itself in a difficult position at the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War as they had to consider more than one factors in their foreign policy. These were the relationships with Britain (and the Commonwealth), the Vatican<sup>93</sup>, and the League of Nations (as an international meeting-place). During the years of the Spanish Civil War, the Fianna Fáil government loosened its ties with Britain<sup>94</sup>. Although still being the member of the Commonwealth, the Free State took significant steps towards total independence. Paying much attention to British case did not mean pushing international issues such as the Spanish Civil War into the background, on the contrary. By performing autonomous foreign policy in Spanish matters, the Irish government indicated that independence from Britain was just a matter of time. But the Fine Gael opposition kept on bringing up the constitutional question even in connection with the Spanish Civil War, in order to prove that de Valera will not manage to bring an independent Irish republic into existence. According to J. Dillon, the Commonwealth "would consolidate Democracy against dictatorship" those days when "the light of democracy and freedom was being quenched throughout the nations of Europe". He went on saying that "if the independence and sovereignty of the country were to be maintained against the threats from all sides, and if the unity of the country were to be achieved in their generation, it must be done on the basis of membership of the Commonwealth of Nations"<sup>95</sup>.

The Free State officially adopted the policy of non-intervention in the Spanish conflict. Many articles appeared in the *Irish Press*<sup>96</sup> explaining the nature of non-intervention,

<sup>93</sup> The policy of the Vatican was a crucial point in the Free State's handling of the Spanish matter, especially in the field of diplomatic recognition.

<sup>94</sup> First, the reference to the Crown was removed from the Constitution in 1936. Then in July 1937, a new Constitution was passed in the Dáil (which brought the independent Ireland, Éire into existence), and finally in spring 1938 the Anglo-Irish Agreement, which dealt with the status of ports in Ireland, was signed. The importance of the latter grew under the years of the Second World War.

<sup>95</sup> *Irish Independent*, 9 August 1936.

<sup>96</sup> The *Irish Press* was founded in 1931, a year before Fianna Fáil come to power. Its curiosity lies in the fact that one of its founding-members was Eamon de Valera, the leader of the government between 1932 and 1948. In spite of the obvious link between the paper and the party, it was empha-

namely that this served the best both Spanish interests and European peace. In connection with the Spanish Civil War, the paper "did not hide its concern for the victims of atrocities [...] but reported the conflict in a considerably more even-handed manner than the *Irish Independent*".<sup>97</sup>

The birth of the non-intervention policy in Ireland dates back to 14 August 1936, when Pierre Guerlet, the French representative in Dublin was contacted that the Irish government accepted the French appeal for non-intervention. On 25 August the Dáil took further steps and adhered to the ban on arms and ammunition to Spain. The following day the *Irish Press* issued a report on the position of de Valera's government and the importance of the non-intervention policy. Besides emphasising the main goals of non-intervention, and that this was the policy to serve best the interests of both Spanish interests and European peace, it clarified that

"the government of the Saorstát Éireann, in common with the Irish people and the Christian world, are profoundly shocked by the tragic events that may have been taking place in Spain and by the excesses by which these events are reported to be accompanied. Their sympathy goes out to the great Spanish people in their terrible suffering. They earnestly hope that peace may soon be restored, and they would gladly participate in any practical effort directed toward that end. To those public bodies, however, and to others who have requested the government to sever diplomatic relations with the Spanish government the government of the Saorstát Éireann would point out that diplomatic relations are primarily between States rather than Governments, and that the severance of diplomatic relations between two countries would serve no useful purpose at the present time."<sup>98</sup>

It was not surprising to read the criticism of the Opposition in the *Irish Independent*, namely that with adhering to the non-intervention policy, the Free State Government "placed the communists on the same level as the defenseless of Christianity". They did not regard non-intervention to be official as it did not "appear to have the force of law", unlike the "Italian-Abyssinian conflict where sanctions against Italy took the form of a Bill"<sup>99</sup>. As the Dáil was not in session at that time, there was no prospect of taking such measures then.

The Non-Intervention Committee was set up in London the next month, where the Irish were represented by John Whelan Dulanty, the Irish high commissioner in London. Like other small states, the Free State insisted on neutrality and non-intervention in order to minimize the conflicts in Europe that may count as threats to peace in the country. According to Bell<sup>100</sup>, Irish participation in the Committee's work was negligible, not because

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sised in the first edition (5 November 1931) that the *Irish Press* was "not the organ of an individual, a group, or a party [but would be] a national organ in all that term conveys."

<sup>97</sup> John Horgan, *Irish Media: A Critical History since 1922* (London: Routledge, 2001), 39.

<sup>98</sup> *Irish Press*, 26 August 1936.

<sup>99</sup> *Irish Independent*, 29 August 1936.

<sup>100</sup> Bell (1969), 147.

of the inefficiency of the Irish government or the delegate, but because administration and decision-making in the 26-membered Committee showed very slow progress<sup>101</sup>. Fine Gael surprisingly did not oppose the principle of non-intervention and thus the establishment of the NIC; unlike Belton from ICF, who had a low opinion on the NIC; he said it “composed of the Radical, Socialist and Communist nations in Europe”<sup>102</sup>.

In spite of domestic criticism, the Free State adhered to the principles and orders of the Committee; in the first year the country contributed to the work of the Committee with £ 7,184. The Dáil passed the resolution about the contribution on 9 April 1937. According to the *Irish Times*, the money was for the “scheme of observation of the Spanish frontiers by land and sea”, that is, for the Control Scheme, which came into operation later that month, on 22 April 1937.

As the reports of the *Irish Press* mostly reflected the views of de Valera government<sup>103</sup>, it is not surprising to find several references to the Vatican’s Spanish policy between 1936 and 1939, as de Valera always considered the Pope’s steps determinant. The paper was aware of the critics of non-intervention; it reminded them to de Valera’s statement that diplomatic relations are primarily between states and not governments, always referring to the standing point of the Vatican. The first article on the issue, entitled “THE VATICAN AND SPANISH CIVIL WAR. THE POPE’S ANXIETY”, appeared on 6 August 1936. However, despite the arguments of the government and the *Irish Press*, the opposition often, and when it suited its own purpose, did not hesitate to be more Catholic than the Pope.<sup>104</sup> Thus de Valera let his paper adopt a “moderately pro-Catholic – but not pro-Francoist – sympathy”.<sup>105</sup>

All in all, non-intervention served the interests of the government the most in the Spanish conflict. During the years of the Spanish Civil War, the de Valera administration managed to strengthen their position in domestic political grounds as well. The results of the 1937 elections also reflected that the government’s decisions (both in domestic and foreign policy) were supported by the majority of the Irish population. De Valera himself referred to this in his speech in the Dáil on 19 February 1937 when he said “the Government’s policy was the policy accepted by the vast majority of the Irish people [and added that] he had no doubt about that”<sup>106</sup>. Fianna Fáil won, the ICF-leader Belton lost even his seat in the Dáil, unlike Ryan, who got in as a candidate of a United Front. The results proved that “the Irish simply refused to become involved in crusades to save either Christianity or democracy”<sup>107</sup> and also that “other matters such as the persistent crisis and the

<sup>101</sup> Keogh (1988), 67.

<sup>102</sup> *Irish Press*, 19 February 1937.

<sup>103</sup> However, naturally there were tensions in the *Irish Press* itself as well, not everyone supported de Valera with all his might; Aodh Blacam, for instance, was openly pro-Franco. His pamphlet, *For God and Spain* is a good example for pro-Nationalist voices.

<sup>104</sup> *Irish Press*, 25 August 1936.

<sup>105</sup> Stradling (1999), 16.

<sup>106</sup> *Irish Press*, 20 February 1937.

<sup>107</sup> Bell (1969), 158.

controversy over the new Constitution, had a greater impact"<sup>108</sup>. Nevertheless it did not mean that Irish society was indifferent to the Spanish Civil War but rather that this was not something which could make people withdraw confidence from the ministry. So Irish people were very much aware of the advantage of the non-intervention policy: there had been no open clashes between the supporters of the two (the Blueshirts and the IRA) Paramilitary groups in Ireland. So de Valera did manage to get rid of those who posed threat to political stability in 1933-34 as Spain was an excellent way to "get rid of some of [the] wild men from both varieties."<sup>109</sup> And what is more, the country had actively participated in the maintenance of European peace (in spite of the obvious failure of the Non-Intervention Committee), which was a prestige for a small state to have her voice heard as effectively as did Ireland.

According to Bell, "Spain had never become a central issue in Irish affairs and other crises, other news, other disasters, attracted the attention of the press as well as the politicians and priests"<sup>110</sup>. In my view, the attention that the Irish public, politics and press paid to the Spanish crisis should not be underestimated because it proved that the country was not isolated from European events in spite of her main problem, Partition. Thus non-intervention policy in Ireland was not at all equal to indifference in Spanish matters between 1936 and 1939.

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<sup>108</sup> Patrick Keatinge, *The Formulation of Irish Foreign Policy* (Dublin: Institute of Public Administration, 1973), 172.

<sup>109</sup> Maurice Manning, *The Blueshirts* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1987), 205.

<sup>110</sup> Bell (1969), 157.

## ***Il Partito Comunista d'Italia e la guerra d'Etiopia. Una rassegna sulla stampa comunista.***

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*1) Dall'incidente di Ual-Ual (dicembre 1934) all'apertura del VII Congresso dell'Internazionale Comunista (luglio 1935)*

La mancata reazione immediata all'incidente di Ual-Ual (5-6 dicembre 1934)<sup>1</sup> sulla stampa del P.C.d'I. è forse dovuta al fatto che, quando esso avviene, sia "L'Unità" che "Lo Stato Operaio" (organo e rivista teorica del partito) sono già chiusi in tipografia. Tuttavia, anche se il P.C.d'I., da sempre attento alle *maiefatte* del fascismo, ignora che i primi piani italiani per conquistare l'Etiopia risalgono al 1932 – cioè a subito dopo la totale *pacificazione* della Libia<sup>2</sup> –, la *tregua* concessa al Duce dal P.C.d'I. sul problema etiopico durerà ben poco. Se, infatti, all'inizio del 1935, a Ual-Ual e al problema etiopico si fanno solo degli accenni<sup>3</sup>, essi saranno poco dopo affrontati direttamente. Si riparerà infatti dell'incidente e di un'eventuale guerra italiana all'Abissinia, che pare sempre più vicina, in occasione della firma degli accordi franco-italiani di Roma (6-7 gennaio 1935).<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Sull'incidente di Ual-Ual cfr. Angelo Del Boca, *Gli italiani in Africa Orientale*, III: *La conquista dell'Impero*, Milano, Mondadori, 1992, pp. 244-291; Renzo De Felice, *Mussolini il Duce*, I: *Gli anni del consenso (1929-1936)*, Torino, Einaudi, 1996, pp. 610-616; Luigi Salvatorelli – Giovanni Mira, *Storia d'Italia nel periodo fascista*, Torino, Einaudi, 1963, pp. 819-820; Enzo Santarelli, *Storia del movimento e del regime fascista*, II, Roma, Editori Riuniti, 1967, pp. 167-168; Giorgio Candeloro, *Storia dell'Italia moderna*, IX: *Il fascismo e le sue guerre*, Milano, Feltrinelli, 1995, pp. 340-341. Ma cfr., inoltre, George W. Baer, *La guerra italo-etiopica e la crisi dell'equilibrio europeo*, Bari, Laterza, 1970, pp. 59-82.

<sup>2</sup> Su questi piani italiani contro l'Etiopia cfr. A. Del Boca, op.cit., pp. 156-159 e pp. 169-179; R. De Felice, op.cit., pp. 603-605; G. Candeloro, op.cit., pp. 337-338.

<sup>3</sup> Cfr., ad esempio, *La via della salvezza per i lavoratori è la via del bolscevismo, la via della lotta contro il corporativismo e per il potere sovietico* (non firmato: d'ora in poi n.f.), in "L'Unità", 1935, 1, appello alla lotta contro una possibile guerra per far cadere il fascismo, ed Egidio Gennari, *Per una « coscienza coloniale » proletaria*, in "Lo Stato Operaio", 1, gennaio 1935, pp. 24-31: vi si parla della colonizzazione italiana della Libia.

<sup>4</sup> Sugli accordi franco-italiani di Roma cfr. L. Salvatorelli – G. Mira, op.cit., p. 817; R. De Felice, op.cit., pp. 602-603; A. Del Boca, op.cit., pp. 259-260; G. W. Baer, op.cit., pp. 82-127. Per parte francese cfr. Jean-Baptiste Duroselle, *Politique étrangère de la France. La décadence (1932-1936)*,

In uno scritto su questo tema, oltre a notare che questo patto non diminuisce affatto il pericolo di guerra, si scrive:

“Ma più importante di ciò che l'Italia ha ottenuto è ciò che (...) si ripromette di ottenere in Africa nel campo della collaborazione « pacifica » in Etiopia, e il cui primo atto è la partecipazione alla ferrovia Gibuti-Addis Abeba. Questa dichiarazione (...) viene fatta nel momento in cui il governo abissino fa appello alla Società delle Nazioni contro l'aggressione delle truppe italiane sul territorio del paese africano. L'Italia, dunque, avrebbe avuto carta bianca per la sua penetrazione « pacifica » (...) in Etiopia ?”<sup>5</sup>

Questa prima reazione del quotidiano può apparire inadatta a quanto potrebbe accadere, poiché è espressa in forma dubitativa, ma è spiegabile perché: 1) non è noto il vero senso degli accordi di Roma; 2) il P.C.d'I. ignora che, fin dal 30 dicembre 1934, Mussolini ha consegnato ai suoi più stretti collaboratori un memoriale dal titolo *Direttive e piano d'azione per risolvere la questione italo abissina*.<sup>6</sup> Anche questa nuova tregua durerà ben poco: infatti, “Lo Stato Operaio”, già nel febbraio 1935, pubblica due articoli che chiariscono come ormai si aspetti solo il momento dell'attacco fascista all'Etiopia, poiché non ci si illude su una *composizione pacifica* della vertenza italo-etiopica. Nel primo<sup>7</sup> si parla, oltre che dell'incidente di Ual-Ual, anche di quello precedente di Gondar, per sottolineare la ormai chiara volontà fascista di occupare l'Etiopia.<sup>8</sup> Ma non solo: dopo un appello al popolo italiano a lottare contro la guerra – futuro asse della politica del partito<sup>9</sup>, si scrive:

“Le popolazioni abissine divengono, perciò, delle alleate del proletariato e dei lavoratori italiani nella lotta contro il fascismo e contro l'imperialismo italiano.”<sup>10</sup> Inoltre, si afferma che “L'interesse dei lavoratori italiani e delle popolazioni abissine, in questa guerra, è di battere l'imperialismo italiano e il fascismo”<sup>11</sup> e si invitano poi i primi ad una costante “(...) attività antimilitarista e antiguerresca (...)”<sup>12</sup> che si riallacci ad esempi del passato.<sup>13</sup>

Nel secondo<sup>14</sup>, invece, si rievocano tutte le imprese coloniali italiane fra cui quelle – fallite – in Abissinia, e si ricorda che, già in passato, la situazione nel settore era difficile

Paris, Le Seuil, 1979, pp. 133-139. Sulle reazioni del P.C.d'I. e del P.C.F. agli accordi cfr. Giuliano Procacci, *Il socialismo internazionale e la guerra d'Etiopia*, Roma, Editori Riuniti, 1978, pp. 17-22.

<sup>5</sup> *Gli accordi franco-italiani di Roma non diminuiscono il pericolo della guerra* (n.f.), in “L'Unità”, 1935, 2. Sulla posizione del P.C.d'I. cfr. G. Procacci, op.cit., p. 21.

<sup>6</sup> Su questo documento cfr. A. Del Boca, op.cit., pp. 255-259 (che lo analizza in dettaglio); R. De Felice, pp. 606-610 (che, a p. 608, sottolinea indirettamente il passaggio sul possibile uso di gas asfissianti); G. Procacci, op.cit., p. 9; G. Candeloro, op.cit., pp. 341-344.

<sup>7</sup> Cfr. *Nostri compiti urgenti* (n.f.), in “Lo Stato Operaio”, 2, febbraio 1935, pp. 83-92.

<sup>8</sup> Cfr. art.cit., loc.cit., p. 83.

<sup>9</sup> Cfr. art.cit., loc.cit., p. 84.

<sup>10</sup> Art.cit., loc.cit., p. 85.

<sup>11</sup> Art.cit., loc.cit., p. 85.

<sup>12</sup> Art.cit., loc.cit., p. 91.

<sup>13</sup> Art.cit., loc.cit., p. 91.

<sup>14</sup> Cfr. Luigi Gallo (Luigi Longo), *Per la disfatta dell'imperialismo italiano*, ivi, pp. 93-101.



per l'Italia.<sup>15</sup> Ci si chiede poi quando inizieranno le operazioni militari, e si constata che: 1) l'Italia farà da sola la guerra, e ciò significa un doppio sacrificio – di sangue ed economico – per il paese; 2) l'invio di truppe italiane in Africa Orientale è già una guerra che il fascismo deve per forza vincere per non cadere.<sup>16</sup> Rilevato poi come il cinico inganno del fascismo agli italiani, convinti di andare in Abissinia per lavoro e non per fare la guerra<sup>17</sup>, si aggiunge che questo non è però il solo motivo, perché "Il fascismo in Africa va a fare una guerra (...) brigantesca (...). Ma (...) mascherà i suoi scopi di rapina imperialistica con la più sfrenata demagogia patriottica (...)", dato che "La più inconfessabile politica di rapina (...) viene presentata come una necessità di difesa nazionale, (...) una missione di civilizzazione, (...) un mezzo per dare pane e lavoro ai disoccupati italiani."<sup>18</sup>

Il P.C.d'I. vuol chiaramente smitizzare il *sogno africano* creato dalla propaganda fascista nel popolo italiano<sup>19</sup>, ma anche agire fra i lavoratori italiani per causare la sconfitta del fascismo.<sup>20</sup>

Ogni possibile *tregua* tra il fascismo e i comunisti italiani è ormai finita, perché nel citato scritto si parla di argomenti e temi poi ripresi dalla stampa del P.C.d'I., ma non solo: essi sono già infatti – del tutto o in parte – un patrimonio di tutto l'antifascismo italiano.<sup>21</sup> Da ora in poi, quindi, c'è costante attenzione ai preparativi fascisti per la guerra all'Etiopia, sia come notiziario che come prese di posizione.<sup>22</sup> Si parla infatti di cosa fare per fermare un sempre più probabile intervento italiano in Abissinia, e si scrive: "Manifestate contro l'invio delle truppe in Africa. Imponete il ritiro delle truppe già inviate (...)". E, collegato il problema attuale a quello dell'indipendenza di tutte le colonie italiane, su di esso si afferma: "Se le truppe italiane sono inviate a combattere contro la Abissinia, il dovere dei soldati italiani è di fraternizzare con le truppe abissine, di abbandonare il fronte con le armi alla mano, di rifiutarsi di combattere."<sup>23</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Cfr. art. cit., loc. cit., pp. 93-94.

<sup>16</sup> Cfr. art. cit., loc. cit., p. 95.

<sup>17</sup> Cfr. art. cit., loc. cit., p. 96.

<sup>18</sup> Cfr. art. cit., loc. cit., p. 97.

<sup>19</sup> Su questo tema cfr. Mario Isnenghi, *Il sogno africano*, in AA.VV., *Le guerre coloniali del fascismo* (a cura di Angelo Del Boca), Bari, Laterza, 1991, pp. 60-71; A. Del Boca, op. cit., pp. 320-350; R. De Felice, op. cit., pp. 626-643.

<sup>20</sup> Cfr. art. cit., loc. cit., pp. 98-101.

<sup>21</sup> Su questo tema cfr. Enzo Santarelli, *L'antifascismo di fronte al colonialismo*, in AA.VV., *Le guerre coloniali del fascismo*, cit., pp. 79-92.

<sup>22</sup> Cfr. *Abbasso la guerra imperialista! Attenzione a quello che avviene in Africa* (n.f.), in "L'Unità", 1935, 3: notiziario sulla situazione da Ual-Ual in poi, dove si parla dell'arrivo del generale Emilio De Bono in Africa Orientale; *Fronte unico contro la guerra!*, ivi: appello comune del P.C.d'I. e della F.G.C.d'I. per la disfatta del fascismo. Sull'invio di De Bono in Africa cfr. A. Del Boca, op. cit., p. 263; R. De Felice, op. cit., pp. 604-606.

<sup>23</sup> *L'imperialismo italiano aggredisce l'Abissinia! Il dovere degli operai, dei contadini e di tutti gli antifascisti è di organizzare la disfatta militare del governo italiano* (n.f.), in "L'Unità", 1935, 4, con anche *Un appello del partito Comunista e del Partito Socialista*, che così si chiude: "« Né un uomo, né un soldo per le avventure africane del capitalismo ! »"

Se l'invito alla diserzione si rifà alla più pura tradizione del movimento comunista internazionale, ben diverso ne è ora il valore: adesso ci si deve opporre ad una *guerra del capitalismo* che potrebbe anche innescare un nuovo conflitto mondiale. Perciò, serve una mobilitazione di massa – in Italia e altrove – in contrasto a quella dei soldati italiani ma, anche, a tutte le minacce di guerra, in Europa e nel mondo.<sup>24</sup> E su questa linea si proseguirà, lanciando un appello al lavoro organico nell'esercito e parlando di tutte le manifestazioni contro la guerra.<sup>25</sup> Ma si rovescia anche sul fascismo l'accusa di essere anti-nazionali che esso lancia su tutti gli antifascisti, scrivendo: "Noi amiamo l'Italia (...). Messo con le spalle al muro dalla sua stessa politica, il fascismo cerca un'ultima difesa degli sfruttatori portando (...) il popolo italiano alla catastrofe, alla guerra. Guerra di rapina coloniale che potrà essere prodromo di una guerra imperialista mondiale (...)". Il fascismo è quindi l'unico vero nemico dell'Italia, ed il P.C.d'I., spiegando la sua opposizione ai preparativi bellici del Duce, scrive che "(...) appunto perché amiamo il nostro paese, siamo per la disfatta militare del nostro imperialismo (...)"<sup>26</sup>

Ormai si è al 1 maggio 1935, ma la prossima festa dei lavoratori non fa dimenticare la crisi italo-etiopica, poiché si scrive che "(...) questo 1 maggio è diverso da quelli degli altri anni, perché la situazione è più preoccupante. Prima di tutto, oggi una nuova guerra incomincia in Abissinia e minaccia una nuova guerra mondiale. Questa è una guerra contro gli interessi del popolo italiano (...)", che "(...) non può che ricavarne (...) nuovi dolori e nuove miserie" poiché da essa è chiaro che "(...) l'avvenire che il fascismo prepara al popolo italiano è nero come la camicia delle sue milizie."<sup>27</sup>

Perciò, i preparativi per la festa dei lavoratori non abbassano l'attenzione su quanto si prepara in Africa Orientale: anzi, il P.C.d'I. e il P.S.I. convocano un Congresso degli italiani all'estero contro la guerra africana.<sup>28</sup> Ma, nel quadro generale molto fosco, si torna sul significato degli accordi franco-italiani di Roma, in particolare per l'Etiopia, scrivendo che l'Italia fascista "(...) va ancora in Africa perché ha avuto via libera dalla Francia. Gli accordi Mussolini-Laval avevano delle clausole segrete. La Francia ha dato all'Italia un po' di territorio africano (...)" ma, anche e soprattutto "(...) mano libera contro l'Abissinia."<sup>29</sup>

<sup>24</sup> Su questo tema cfr. anche *Problemi essenziali dell'ora* (n.f.), in "Lo Stato Operaio", 3, marzo 1935, pp. 161-167; ma cfr. anche Nicola Ferretti, *L'imperialismo italiano contro l'Abissinia*, ivi, pp. 181-191, quadro storico delle precedenti imprese italiane nel settore e invito alla solidarietà con il popolo abissino.

<sup>25</sup> Cfr., ad esempio, "L'Unità", 1935, 5, con i seguenti scritti: *Il popolo italiano reagisce all'avventura brigantesca del governo fascista* (n.f.) (su certe reazioni ai preparativi di guerra); *Un esempio di lavoro fra i soldati nella Venezia-Giulia* (n.f.) (sul lavoro nell'esercito); *Importante manifestazione contro la guerra in Africa a New York (sic!)* (n.f.) (su una sfilata di solidarietà con l'Abissinia).

<sup>26</sup> *Noi amiamo il nostro paese*, in "L'Unità", 1935, 5.

<sup>27</sup> *Questo 1° maggio*, in "L'Unità", 1935, 6.

<sup>28</sup> *Il Congresso degli italiani all'estero contro la guerra d'Africa* (n.f.), in "L'Unità", 1935, 6.

<sup>29</sup> *La situazione internazionale ha i caratteri di una vigilia di guerra* (n.f.), in "L'Unità", 1935, 6. Sulla *mano libera* in Etiopia concessa all'Italia dalla Francia cfr. A. Del Boca, op.cit., pp. 259-260; G. Candeloro, op.cit., p. 368; R. De Felice, op.cit., p. 612; J.-B. Duroselle, op.cit., pp. 130-133, che

In un quadro internazionale nero, è ben accolta la firma del patto franco-sovietico, atto di pace proprio mentre può scoppiare una guerra che potrebbe anche divenire mondiale<sup>30</sup>: tema che, pur in un nuovo clima di fiducia, non è certo trascurato.<sup>31</sup> Continuano infatti le prese di posizione contro la guerra d'Etiopia e, in una, dopo aver previsto l'inizio delle ostilità per agosto<sup>32</sup>, si delineano le difficoltà per l'Italia fascista in caso di conflitto, poiché: "(...) questa guerra, che i propagandisti fascisti si compiacciono di dire facile, sicura, una « passeggiata », si presenta, invece, come (...) durissima, che costerà fiumi di sangue e sacrifici (...), che precipiterà lo scoppio di una guerra mondiale (...)." <sup>33</sup> Se questa analisi non comporta nulla di nuovo, più interessanti paiono le note sul clima della zona: "Già le notizie che mandano i soldati, gli operai dall'Africa, parlano chiaro. Appena giunti, i soldati e gli operai si ammalano (...) a centinaia, a migliaia. Pochi sono quelli che sfuggono (...) alle (...) varie malattie coloniali." <sup>34</sup> Le notazioni non sono né casuali né polemiche, ma vogliono invece smascherare il cinismo fascista che prima nega le malattie e i rimpatri affrettati dall'Africa Orientale e poi mente agli italiani assicurando i nuovi partenti sul *clima fresco* delle zone dell'Abissinia dove andranno.<sup>35</sup> Le menzogne della propaganda fascista continuano, poiché essa afferma che "(...) non c'è da temere degli abissini: gli italiani ne faranno un solo boccone. Menzogne ancora. L'Abissinia (...) può mobilitare un numeroso esercito, di circa un mezzo milione di soldati, armati di fucili moderni." Anche se non si ignora che "(...) il fascismo assassino e predone, che pretende di portare laggiù la civiltà, dispone di aeroplani, di tanks, di gas asfissianti di cui gli abissini mancano completamente." <sup>36</sup> Se non è condivisibile la certezza dei comunisti italiani su un

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riporta le affermazioni di Mussolini, le smentite di Laval e la successiva riconferma del Duce. Ma cfr. anche *Via dall'Africa ! Pane, pace e libertà !* (n.f.), in "L'Unità", 1935, 7: analisi delle catastrofiche conseguenze economiche dell'avventura italiana in Abissinia dopo il *via libera* francese. Sul problema cfr. Giuseppe Maione, *L'imperialismo straccione. Classi sociali e finanza di guerra dall'impresa etiopica al conflitto mondiale (1935-1943)*, Bologna, Il Mulino, 1979, pp. 105-108 e Id., *I costi delle imprese coloniali*, in AA.VV., *Le guerre coloniali del fascismo*, cit., pp. 412-417.

<sup>30</sup> Cfr. *Il patto franco-sovietico è un patto di pace* (n.f.), in "L'Unità", 1935, 8, e *Necessità di concretezza contro il pericolo immediato di una guerra mondiale* (n.f.), in "Lo Stato Operaio", 4-5, aprile-maggio 1935, pp. 261-269: difesa della politica di pace dell'URSS. Su questo punto cfr. G. Procacci, op.cit., p. 48. Sul valore - e i limiti - del patto franco-sovietico cfr. William E. Scott, *Le pacte franco-soviétique. Alliance contre Hitler*, Paris, Payot, 1965.

<sup>31</sup> Cfr., in questo senso, *Politica di briganti* (n.f.) e *La guerra imminente* (n.f.), in "L'Unità", 1935, 8: nel primo si nota l'assurdità dei sogni di Mussolini di una facile conquista dell'Etiopia; nel secondo, che questo conflitto causa tensioni in Europa. Su questo punto cfr. A. Del Boca, op.cit., pp. 353-355.

<sup>32</sup> Cfr. *Il fascismo è la guerra* (n.f.), in "L'Unità", 1935, 9.

<sup>33</sup> Art.cit., loc.cit.

<sup>34</sup> Art.cit., loc.cit.

<sup>35</sup> Cfr. art.cit., loc.cit.

<sup>36</sup> Art.cit., loc.cit. Sull'uso dei gas - poi avvenuto - cfr. A. Del Boca, op.cit., pp. 431-680. Sulle polemiche nate dalle rivelazioni di Angelo Del Boca sul tema cfr. Angelo Del Boca, *Una lunga battaglia per la verità*, in AA.VV., *I gas di Mussolini* (a cura di Angelo Del Boca), Roma, Editori Riuniti, 1996, pp. 17-48, ma anche gli altri saggi del volume.



moderno esercito etiopico schierato contro le truppe fasciste, più interessante è invece la previsione dell'uso di gas asfissianti da parte degli italiani nel conflitto, poi divenuta realtà: il P.C.d'I. qui capisce bene che con questa guerra il fascismo si gioca la reputazione interna ed estera, e quindi userà ogni mezzo pur di vincere. Ma si è anche certi che la guerra sarà lunga e difficile, e i lavoratori devono trasformarla nella sconfitta del fascismo italiano.<sup>37</sup>

Il futuro conflitto italo-etiopico non è più visto solo come *caso interno* italiano, ma è collegato alla politica internazionale, e con la cosiddetta *Santa Alleanza dei fascismi* contro l'URSS<sup>38</sup>, unico paese garante della pace nonostante le cattive interpretazioni della dichiarazione di Stalin a Mosca del 15 maggio 1935, durante la visita di Pierre Laval.<sup>39</sup> E sul tema della difesa dell'URSS e della sua politica di pace, collegato all'ormai inevitabile conflitto in Abissinia, si tornerà ancora.<sup>40</sup> La concatenazione sarà poi confermata dal quotidiano del P.C.d'I., che scrive: "La guerra contro l'Abissinia è imminente. Né le grandi potenze imperialistiche né la Società delle Nazioni metteranno l'Italia nell'impossibilità di scatenarla."<sup>41</sup> Amara constatazione, che pare prevedere fin da ora l'inutilità delle sanzioni economiche contro l'Italia poi decretate dalla S.D.N.<sup>42</sup> E se l'articolo si chiude con la convinzione che, per fermare la nuova avventura fascista, è necessario *fare come in Russia* e, cioè, la rivoluzione in Italia, tale prospettiva in tempi brevi appare piuttosto improbabile. Tuttavia, altrove si nota la necessità di intensificare il lavoro politico in Italia, in particolare nelle fabbriche, per far fallire un progetto colonial-militarista che il fascismo già trova pericoloso poiché pratica una cinica politica dei *compartimenti stagni* fra soldati in partenza per l'Africa Orientale e le loro famiglie, *invitate* a non occuparsi più dei congiunti.<sup>43</sup>

<sup>37</sup> Cfr. art. cit., loc. cit.

<sup>38</sup> Cfr. *Contro la Santa Alleanza dei fascismi nemici dell'U.R.S.S. e della pace nel mondo* (n.f.), in "L'Unità", 1935, 9.

<sup>39</sup> Cfr. *L'U.R.S.S. difende la pace* (n.f.), ivi. Vi fu, soprattutto in Francia, una polemica a proposito della frase di Stalin sulla difesa nazionale francese, al termine dell'incontro con Laval. Per un quadro generale della situazione francese al momento cfr. Giorgio Caredda, *Il Fronte Popolare in Francia 1934-1938*, Torino, Einaudi, 1977, pp. 40-42. Il P.C.F. svolse una vera e propria *campagna di spiegazioni*, culminata nel celebre manifesto *Staline a raison*. Su di essa cfr. Alessandro Rosselli, *Il P.C.F. e il problema del riarmo, 1935-1937*, in "Studi dell'Istituto Linguistico", VI, 1983, pp. 249-253.

<sup>40</sup> Cfr. *La politica di pace dell'URSS*, in "Lo Stato Operaio", 6, giugno 1935, pp. 321-330. Su questo testo cfr. G. Procacci, op. cit., pp. 93-94.

<sup>41</sup> *Fare come in Russia* (n.f.), in "L'Unità", 1935, 10.

<sup>42</sup> Sulle sanzioni economiche all'Italia cfr. Manfred Funke, *Sanzioni e cannoni. Hitler, Mussolini e il conflitto italo-etiopico*, Milano, Garzanti, 1972.

<sup>43</sup> Cfr. *La lotta contro la guerra impone a tutti i rivoluzionari dei sacrifici, elevati fino all'eroismo* (n.f.), in "L'Unità", 1935, 10, e *La politica di guerra del fascismo conduce l'Italia alla catastrofe* (n.f.), ivi, sull'impovertimento del paese e le menzogne fasciste sull'Etiopia; inoltre, due appelli e lo scritto *Il Congresso degli italiani all'estero contro la guerra d'Africa* (n.f.). Su questo argomento cfr. anche *L'avventura africana del fascismo nella situazione internazionale* (n.f.), in "Lo Stato Operaio", 7, luglio 1935, pp. 401-404, e anche (ivi, pp. 475-477) una risoluzione del CC del P.C.d'I.

Fra poco, però, inizierà a Mosca il VII Congresso dell'Internazionale Comunista, preparato da tempo<sup>44</sup>, che la stampa del P.C.d'I. seguirà senza però disinteressarsi del problema etiopico.<sup>45</sup> Vale la pena di soffermarsi sull'assise moscovita, proprio in rapporto alla prossima guerra in Abissinia.

## 2) Il VII Congresso dell'Internazionale Comunista (luglio-agosto 1935)

Il VII – ed ultimo – Congresso dell'Internazionale Comunista si apre a Mosca il 25 luglio 1935 e si chiude il 21 agosto successivo.<sup>46</sup> L'assemblea moscovita è senza dubbio una svolta nella politica dell'I.C. e apre la strada alla formazione, nello stesso 1935, di coalizioni di Fronte Popolare che nel 1936, almeno in due casi – quelli spagnolo e francese – produrranno governi ispirati alla stessa formula politica<sup>47</sup>, subendo poi i contraccolpi della situazione internazionale e della stessa politica estera sovietica.<sup>48</sup> Ma, proprio in questo congresso, colpisce il fatto che, nelle varie analisi compiute sul fascismo, identificato come il principale fattore – e fautore – di guerra<sup>49</sup>, quasi non si parli del rischio più immediato di conflitto – quello etiopico – che proprio uno dei componenti la *Santa Alleanza dei fascismi*<sup>50</sup>, l'Italia di Mussolini, sta per scatenare. La mancanza è forse spiegabile con il fatto che – come si è notato – la dimensione del VII Congresso è

<sup>44</sup> Sui preparativi del VII Congresso dell'Internazionale Comunista cfr. "L'Unità", 1935, 1, e *Verso il VII° Congresso della I.C. Compiti e tattica dei Partiti Comunisti* (n.f.), in "Lo Stato Operaio", 1, gennaio 1935, pp. 41-52.

<sup>45</sup> L'inizio del VII Congresso dell'I.C. non distoglie dal problema etiopico: per notizie sulle manifestazioni in tutto il mondo contro questa possibile guerra cfr. "L'Unità", 1935, 11. Su queste reazioni estere cfr. A. Del Boca, op.cit., pp. 328-334; G. Procacci, op.cit., pp. 96-97.

<sup>46</sup> Per l'inizio e la fine dei lavori cfr. V. M. Lejbzon – K. K. Sirinja, *Il VII Congresso dell'Internazionale Comunista*, Roma, Editori Riuniti, 1975, p. 85. Ma sul significato del Congresso cfr. inoltre Paolo Spriano, *Storia del Partito Comunista Italiano*, III: *I fronti popolari, Stalin, la guerra*, Torino, Einaudi, 1970, pp. 18-39; Franco De Felice, *Fascismo Democrazia Fronte Popolare. Il movimento comunista alla svolta del VII Congresso*, Bari, De Donato, 1973; Milos Hajek, *Storia dell'Internazionale Comunista (1921-1935)*, Roma, Editori Riuniti, 1975, pp. 280-298; Marta Dassù, *Fronte unico e fronte popolare: il VII Congresso del Comintern*, in AA.VV., *Storia del marxismo*, III, 2: *Il marxismo nell'età della Terza Internazionale. Dalla crisi del '29 al XX Congresso*, Torino, Einaudi, 1981, pp. 589-626. Per un giudizio fin troppo critico cfr. Fernando Claudin, *La crisi del movimento comunista. Dal Comintern al Cominform*, Milano, Feltrinelli, 1974, pp. 142-153.

<sup>47</sup> Cfr. in questo senso V. M. Lejbzon – K. K. Sirinja, op.cit., pp. 253-270; M. Hajek, op.cit., pp. 280-298; F. De Felice, op.cit., pp. 26-58; M. Dassù, op.cit., pp. 621-626: tutti notano il valore – e i limiti – della formula politica del Fronte Popolare uscita dal VII Congresso. Una severa critica del suo carattere di svolta è in F. Claudin, op.cit., pp. 142-158.

<sup>48</sup> Su questo tema cfr. Silvio Pons, *Stalin e la guerra inevitabile (1936-1941)*, Torino, Einaudi, 1995, *passim*.

<sup>49</sup> Cfr. in questo senso V. M. Lejbzon – K. K. Sirinja, op.cit., pp. 91-130; M. Hajek, op.cit., pp. 280-298; F. De Felice, op.cit., pp. 58-79; M. Dassù, op.cit., pp. 611-620.

<sup>50</sup> Per questa definizione – poi reiterata dalla stampa del P.C.d'I – cfr. la nota 38.

strettamente *eurocentrica*<sup>51</sup>. La spiegazione ne richiama però un'altra: al congresso, i rappresentanti del comunismo internazionale privilegiarono la discussione sulla creazione di un Fronte Popolare antifascista che, erede del fronte unico operaio già realizzato in alcuni paesi democratici o in altri – come l'Austria – da poco sotto dittatura, sconfiggesse il fascismo nel suo luogo di nascita. A ciò si aggiunge – per chi scrive – un'evidente quanto dannosa e superficiale sottovalutazione del fascismo italiano rispetto al nazismo tedesco. Pure, era chiaro a tutti che il primo pericolo di guerra – quella, appunto d'Etiopia – su cui proprio la stampa comunista internazionale aveva insistito come detonatore di un conflitto mondiale, veniva dal Duce e non dal Führer. In ogni caso, nel congresso, escluso un accenno all'Etiopia nel rapporto del presidente della KPD Wilhelm Pieck<sup>52</sup>, l'unico intervento che tratti, anche in contesto più generale, la questione, è quello del segretario del P.C.d'I., Palmiro Togliatti<sup>53</sup>, sul quale ci si soffermerà. Nel suo rapporto, il *leader* comunista italiano parla di molti argomenti, fra cui della situazione generale in Europa causata, come pericolo di guerra, dal sistema di Versailles, e in cui l'unica garanzia di pace sono l'URSS e la sua potenza.<sup>54</sup> Subito dopo, Togliatti si occupa della preparazione della guerra contro l'Etiopia da parte dell'Italia fascista e, dopo aver voluto dimostrare come ciò derivi da tutta la vecchia politica estera mussoliniana<sup>55</sup>, afferma: "Il conflitto con l'Abissinia è anche il punto d'approdo della demagogia nazionalista e sciovinista del fascismo, lo sbocco della campagne cosiddette popolari con le quali il fascismo si è sforzato di ingannare le masse. Ogni volta (...) che la situazione del paese si aggrava, il fascismo scatena una nuova campagna demagogica. Ma arriva un momento nel quale ogni demagogia incomincia ad essere vana e il fascismo è preso al laccio del suo sciovinismo esasperato. Sotto la spinta dei gruppi della borghesia più interessati a cercare una via d'uscita nella guerra, esso precipita nella guerra che ha predicato come « igiene del mondo », come necessità ineluttabile per la soluzione dei problemi che gli stanno di fronte. La guerra è l'ultima *ratio* di ogni regime fascista."<sup>56</sup> Fin da ora, Togliatti ha ben chiaro in che trappola è caduto il fascismo italiano. Vittima della sua demagogia, deve ora andare fino in fondo se non vuole cadere. E prosegue, affermando che: "La campagna militare dell'Italia nell'Africa Orientale ha avuto e avrà come conseguenza un nuovo inasprimento dei rapporti tra le potenze capitalistiche, non solo nel settore messo in causa dall'attacco italiano, ma in tutti gli altri (...). Le sue ripercussioni in Europa sono fin d'ora molto profonde e si approfondiranno ancora di più se il conflitto sarà risolto con le

<sup>51</sup> Per la definizione – ripresa poi da G.Procacci, op.cit., pp. 95-96 – cfr. F. De Felice, op.cit., p. 49; F. Claudin, op.cit., p. 147.

<sup>52</sup> Cfr. *VII<sup>th</sup> Congress of the Communist International. Abridged Report of proceedings*, Moscow, Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1939, p. 27. Il testo completo fu pubblicato in "La Correspondance Internationale", XV, 69, 19 agosto 1935, pp. 1001-1023.

<sup>53</sup> Pubblicato all'inizio come Ercoli (Palmiro Togliatti), *La lotta contro la guerra*, Bruxelles, Edizioni di Cultura Sociale, 1935. Ora è, con il titolo *La preparazione di una nuova guerra mondiale da parte degli imperialisti e i compiti dell'Internazionale Comunista*, in Palmiro Togliatti, *Opere*, III, 2, a cura di Ernesto Ragionieri, Roma, Editori Riuniti, 1973, pp. 703-805, da cui si cita.

<sup>54</sup> Cfr. P. Togliatti, op.cit., pp. 730-757.

<sup>55</sup> Cfr. P. Togliatti, op.cit., pp. 757-758.

<sup>56</sup> P. Togliatti, op.cit., p. 758.

armi.<sup>57</sup> In questo caso, Togliatti fa sua una considerazione sul possibile degenerare del conflitto italo-etiopico in guerra mondiale e, rilevato che lo scontro armato fra Italia ed Etiopia interessa tutti i paesi capitalisti<sup>58</sup>, delinea poi la posizione in materia dell'Inghilterra, affermando: "L'Inghilterra che si oppone alla politica di guerra dell'Italia per delle ragioni cosiddette pacifiste, è guidata in realtà dal suo interesse egoistico di grande potenza imperialistica, in quanto, nell'occupazione dell'impero etiopico da parte dell'Italia, vede un primo atto concreto che modifica la carta dei possessi coloniali in Africa e solleva perciò la questione di una nuova spartizione del mondo."<sup>59</sup> E ciò, proprio quando anche la Polonia rivendica per sé delle colonie, crea un pericoloso precedente.<sup>60</sup> Quindi, una resistenza inglese "(...) non può che spingere l'Italia alla guerra, poiché essa fa comprendere ai briganti italiani che se non si affrettano la preda da essi ambita cadrà nelle mani di altri briganti."<sup>61</sup>

Poi, Togliatti delinea quello che pensa sarà l'atteggiamento francese su una possibile guerra italo-etiopica, affermando: "La Francia è interessata a lasciar fare l'Italia per non perdere un appoggio del quale avrà bisogno al momento decisivo; ma (...) ha ragione di temere che (...) se l'Italia impegna le sue forze in Africa, si produce un inasprimento repentino della situazione in Europa, dove il fascismo tedesco è pronto a cogliere l'occasione per mettersi in marcia e realizzare i suoi obiettivi in Austria, nel bacino del Danubio, alla frontiera italiana."<sup>62</sup>

Da queste considerazioni, né l'Inghilterra né la Francia paiono essere fattori positivi per bloccare l'aggressione italiana all'Etiopia, e ciò vale anche per la S.D.N. di Ginevra; inoltre, la Germania nazista ha interesse a vedere impegnata l'Italia in Etiopia per essere libera in Europa, in particolare nella zona carpatico-danubiana.<sup>63</sup> Infine, si polemizza con il Giappone, che si atteggia a protettore dell'Etiopia per mascherare il suo imperialismo.<sup>64</sup> Riaffermato poi il concetto di pace indivisibile<sup>65</sup>, si fa poi un ritratto dell'imperialismo italiano, definito *straccione*<sup>66</sup>, per poi affermare che, oggi, in Mar Rosso, l'Italia si comporta come in Libia nel 1911.<sup>67</sup> Tornato al problema centrale, Togliatti afferma: "Ultima (...) osservazione. L'aggressione dell'Italia fascista contro l'Abissinia avrà come (...) conseguenza di inasprire il contrasto tra il mondo imperialistico e i popoli coloniali e

<sup>57</sup> P. Togliatti, op.cit., p. 759.

<sup>58</sup> Cfr. P. Togliatti, op.cit., p. 759.

<sup>59</sup> P. Togliatti, op.cit., p. 759.

<sup>60</sup> Cfr. P. Togliatti, op.cit., p. 759. Sulle rivendicazioni coloniali della Polonia – fatte nel 1935 e reiterate nel 1936 – di cui parla Togliatti cfr. J.-B. Duroselle, op.cit., p. 193.

<sup>61</sup> P. Togliatti, op.cit., p. 759.

<sup>62</sup> P. Togliatti, op.cit., p. 759.

<sup>63</sup> Cfr. A. Del Boca, op.cit., pp. 354-355, che documenta un prestito tedesco di 3 milioni di marchi all'Etiopia per comprare armi; R. De Felice, op.cit., pp. 730-731.

<sup>64</sup> Cfr. P. Togliatti, op.cit., p. 759. Sulle ingerenze del Giappone in Etiopia cfr. A. Del Boca, op.cit., pp. 350-351.

<sup>65</sup> Cfr. P. Togliatti, op.cit., p. 759.

<sup>66</sup> La definizione di Togliatti è ripresa dallo Giuseppe Maione nel suo libro *L'imperialismo straccione*, op.cit.

<sup>67</sup> Cfr. P. Togliatti, op.cit., p. 759.

di spingere a nuove lotte aperte.”<sup>68</sup> Introdotto il nuovo tema di una possibile ripresa di rivolte dei popoli coloniali causata da questo prossimo conflitto e ricordati i crimini del fascismo in Libia<sup>69</sup>, aggiunge a conferma: “Una guerra del fascismo contro l’ultimo Stato indigeno libero scatenerà la (...) rivolta in tutta l’Africa nera, nei paesi arabi e nell’India musulmana.”<sup>70</sup>; e ciò è confermato dal non certo anti-colonialista e ufficioso quotidiano parigino “Le Temps” del 24 luglio 1935.<sup>71</sup> Togliatti afferma poi che i comunisti si opporranno comunque all’aggressione italiana all’Etiopia anche se essa è una nazione ancora semi-feudale<sup>72</sup> e si rifà, in questo senso, alla politica delle nazionalità di Lenin e Stalin<sup>73</sup>, e poi aggiunge: “Il Partito Comunista d’Italia ha avuto (...) ragione di prendere un atteggiamento disfattista verso la guerra imperialista del fascismo italiano, lanciando la parola d’ordine « Giù le mani dall’Abyssinia ! » e dichiarandosi pronto a sostenere la lotta di liberazione del popolo abissino.”<sup>74</sup> E, in concreto, aggiunge: “E io vi assicuro che se il negus dell’Abyssinia aiuterà il proletariato italiano ad assestare un colpo tra capo e collo al regime delle camice nere, nessuno gli rimprovererà di essere « arretrato » (...). Il popolo abissino è l’alleato del proletariato italiano contro il fascismo e (...) gli esprimiamo la nostra simpatia (...)” poiché sempre “(...) i comunisti (...), ovunque la bandiera della rivolta dei popoli coloniali sarà alzata, (...) interverranno attivamente per (...) assicurare la vittoria dei popoli delle colonie contro i loro oppressori.”<sup>75</sup>

L’Intervento di Togliatti è importante anche perché è l’unico ad offrire un’analisi dell’ormai prossimo conflitto italo-etiope, pur inserita in una discussione dove si parla della preparazione di una nuova guerra da parte del nazismo, visto come *nemico principale*<sup>76</sup>. Il VII. Congresso, vera e propria *svolta* nella politica dell’I.C., resta però *eurocentrico*, cioè più interessato alla formula politica del Fronte Popolare, poi vincente in Spagna e in Francia tra il febbraio e il maggio 1936<sup>77</sup>, che ai problemi extra-europei.<sup>78</sup> Togliatti ha dunque il merito di aver affrontato una questione che poteva correre il rischio

<sup>68</sup> P. Togliatti, op.cit., p. 760.

<sup>69</sup> Cfr. P. Togliatti, op.cit., p. 760. Su questo punto cfr. Angelo Del Boca, *I crimini del colonialismo fascista*, in AA.VV., *Le guerre coloniali del fascismo*, cit., pp. 234-236.

<sup>70</sup> P. Togliatti, op.cit., p. 760 Togliatti sopravvaluta la portata *rivoluzionaria* delle reazioni arabe alla guerra d’Etiopia. Sul tema cfr. Giuliano Procacci, *Il mondo arabo e l’aggressione italiana all’Etiopia*, in “Annali Feltrinelli”, 1982, pp. 229-266.

<sup>71</sup> Cfr. P. Togliatti, op.cit., pp. 760-761.

<sup>72</sup> P. Togliatti, op.cit., p. 761.

<sup>73</sup> Cfr. P. Togliatti, op.cit., p. 761.

<sup>74</sup> P. Togliatti, op.cit., pp. 761-762.

<sup>75</sup> P. Togliatti, op.cit., p. 762.

<sup>76</sup> Sull’intervento di Togliatti cfr. P. Spriano, op.cit., pp. 31-39; Giuliano Procacci, *La « lotta per la pace » nel socialismo internazionale*, in AA.VV., *Storia del marxismo*, III, 2, cit., pp. 577-582.

<sup>77</sup> Sulla svolta di Fronte Popolare in Spagna e in Francia cfr. Gerald Brenan, *Storia della Spagna 1874-1936*, Torino, Einaudi, 1970, pp. 283-299; G. Caredda, op.cit., pp. 88-102. I

<sup>78</sup> Infatti sono *eurocentrici* i tre principali interventi del VII Congresso, quello di Georgij Dimitrov, in F. De Felice, op.cit., pp. 101-167, quello di Maurice Thorez, ivi, pp. 368-405, e quello di Klement Gottwald, ivi, pp. 429-442. Per un giudizio sul discorso di Togliatti al VII Congresso, anche in rapporto alla guerra d’Etiopia, cfr. G. Procacci, *Il socialismo internazionale...*, cit., pp. 98-100.



di passare addirittura sotto silenzio<sup>79</sup>; e non è poco, se si pensa alla poca significatività dei già scarsi interventi degli esponenti dei partiti comunisti ei paesi coloniali.<sup>80</sup>

3) *Dopo il VII Congresso: dall'agosto 1935 all'attacco italiano all'Etiopia (8 ottobre 1935)*

Anche durante i lavori di Mosca<sup>81</sup>, la stampa del P.C.d'I. segue da vicino la crisi italo-etiopica. In un scritto in cui si conferma la sfiducia nella S.D.N. e si ritorce sul fascismo l'accusa di essere anti-nazionale<sup>82</sup>, si scrive: "Mussolini vuole la guerra a tutti i costi. Questo (...) appare da tutte le trattative (...) a Ginevra, (...), a Parigi."<sup>83</sup> Da ciò si parte per affermare che Francia e Inghilterra hanno mostrato una buona disposizione verso l'Italia fascista, cui hanno offerto una parte del territorio etiopico, perché "(...) volevano vendere la pelle degli altri: la libertà e l'indipendenza nazionale dell'Abissinia."<sup>84</sup> Ma – si nota –, il Duce "(...) ha rifiutato. Mussolini vuol mettere sotto il tallone dei briganti imperialisti italiani tutta l'Abissinia. Mussolini vuole la guerra (...) perché ne ha bisogno (...) per rinsaldare il suo potere vacillante, sfruttando il prestigio di una (...) vittoria militare."<sup>85</sup> Qui si coglie un fatto ben preciso: Mussolini deve vincere in Etiopia, pena la caduta del suo regime, ma ha fatto male i suoi conti perché la guerra sarà per ambedue i popoli, abissino e italiano, "(...) morte, fame schiavitù: la catastrofe."<sup>86</sup> Oltretutto, l'ormai prossimo conflitto<sup>87</sup> ne causerà certamente uno in Europa. In questo senso, non ci si illude, poiché: "I primi colpi in Africa si ripercuoteranno (...), in Europa. (...) Sarà lo scatenamento dell'offensiva hitleriana."<sup>88</sup> Il passo dello scritto è molto importante: coglie infatti due aspetti del problema poi documentati in sede storica: 1) la Germania vuol tenere a lungo impegnata l'Italia in Abissinia per fare i suoi giochi in Europa; 2) il fascismo, anche se vencesse in Etiopia, si troverebbe a dover fare una politica estera diretta – se già non lo è – da Berlino. Anche per ciò, il fascismo non fa una politica nazionale per l'Italia, monopolio, invece, dell'opposizione antifascista, e in particolare del P.C.d'I.<sup>89</sup> A questa linea si rifanno due articoli de "Lo Stato Operaio" dove si ripete la sfiducia nella S.D.N., si attaccano Francia ed Inghilterra per la loro condiscendenza verso

<sup>79</sup> Un giudizio sul discorso di Togliatti al VII Congresso è in G. Procacci, *Il socialismo internazionale...*, op.cit., pp. 98-100.

<sup>80</sup> Cfr. in questo senso G. Procacci, op.cit., p. 98.

<sup>81</sup> Cfr. in questo senso, la nota 45.

<sup>82</sup> Cfr. *Tutti quanti amano l'Italia devono essere contro la guerra d'Africa* (n.f.), in "L'Unità", 1935, 11.

<sup>83</sup> Art.cit., loc.cit.

<sup>84</sup> Art.cit., loc.cit. Sulle trattative di Parigi cfr. A. Del Boca, op.cit., pp. 322-323; R. De Felice, op.cit., pp. 671-673; G. Procacci, op.cit., p. 107.

<sup>85</sup> Art.cit., loc.cit.

<sup>86</sup> Art.cit., loc.cit.

<sup>87</sup> Cfr. art.cit., loc.cit.

<sup>88</sup> Art.cit., loc.cit.

<sup>89</sup> Cfr. art.cit., loc.cit.

il fascismo e, in caso di guerra, si rinnova la solidarietà al popolo abissino.<sup>90</sup> Ma il tempo stringe: la guerra all'Etiopia, tanto attesa perché giudicata inevitabile, scoppierà fra poco.

#### 4) Dall'attacco all'Etiopia alla presa di Addis Abeba (ottobre 1935-maggio 1936)

Il 3 ottobre 1935 le truppe italiane passano la frontiera con l'Etiopia.<sup>91</sup> Il P.C.d'I. reagisce subito, e "L'Unità" scrive: "Mussolini ha scatenato la guerra in Africa; e se il popolo italiano non arresterà l'avventura micidiale nella quale il « duce » sta gettando il (...) paese, la guerra d'Africa può divampare (...) in un incendio mondiale."<sup>92</sup> Se qui non c'è nulla di nuovo, in seguito si afferma: "Il popolo italiano è asfissiato da una campagna di menzogne. I nostri giovani vanno a morire (...) di febbre, di sete, del piombo degli abissini che difendono il suolo della loro patria, nella ignoranza (...) della gravità (...) del pericolo."<sup>93</sup> Qui, oltre a parlare – come già prima – delle difficoltà della guerra, si chiarisce un punto importante: il fascismo poteva scatenare il conflitto solo grazie alla propaganda che creava un consenso popolare all'impresa.<sup>94</sup> E si aggiunge: "Gettandosi (...) su un popolo pressoché inerme, Mussolini disonora tutta la nazione italiana (...)" poiché, infatti, in tutto il mondo c'è "(...) l'orrore e il disprezzo per il provocatore Mussolini. (...)".<sup>95</sup> Si vuol tuttavia separare il popolo italiano dal fascismo e dai suoi crimini<sup>96</sup> per smentire poi le menzogne fasciste sull'Abissinia come terra di popolamento per gli italiani<sup>97</sup>. E perciò si conclude: "Il vero eroismo è quello di chi si batte contro la guerra, (...) per la libertà della patria. Via dall'Africa! Via Mussolini!"<sup>98</sup> La condanna della nuova impresa fascista è qui evidente, e altrove si ribalta – per ora – l'idea di *nemico principale* uscita dal VII Congresso dell'I.C. poiché si scrive: "Il nostro nemico principale è in questo momento in Italia, è il fascismo, e non l'imperialismo inglese e il negus dell'Abissinia."<sup>99</sup> La situazione però precipita, e dalle parole si deve passare ai fatti: perciò si parla del futuro *Congresso degli italiani contro la guerra* (Bruxelles, 12-13 ottobre 1935) e di un passo dell'I.C. presso l'Internazionale Operaia Socialista per

<sup>90</sup> Cfr. *Giù le mani dall'Abissinia* (n.f.), in "Lo Stato Operaio", 8 agosto 1935, pp. 483-488; Garlandi, *Per l'organizzazione del fronte popolare antifascista in Italia*, in "Lo Stato Operaio", 9, settembre 1935, pp. 599-601, con un indirizzo di solidarietà al popolo abissino.

<sup>91</sup> Su questi avvenimenti cfr. A. Del Boca, op.cit., pp. 395-410, R. De Felice, op.cit., pp. 693-694. Per il loro impatto sull'opinione pubblica internazionale cfr. G. Procacci, op.cit., pp. 145-147.

<sup>92</sup> *L'ora del vero eroismo* (n.f.), in "L'Unità", 1935, 12.

<sup>93</sup> Art.cit., loc.cit.

<sup>94</sup> Su questo argomento cfr. A. Del Boca, op.cit., pp. 334-350.

<sup>95</sup> Art.cit., loc.cit.

<sup>96</sup> Cfr. art.cit., loc.cit.

<sup>97</sup> Cfr. art.cit., loc.cit.

<sup>98</sup> Art.cit., loc.cit.

<sup>99</sup> *Il nostro nemico è il fascismo* (n.f.), in "L'Unità", 1935, 12.

un'azione comune contro la guerra<sup>100</sup>, e su "L'Unità" si pubblica poi un articolo sui lavori dell'assise.<sup>101</sup> Si seguono però anche gli sviluppi della guerra: le operazioni militari non vanno bene e il comandante italiano, generale Emilio De Bono, è sostituito dal parigrado Pietro Badoglio.<sup>102</sup> Si continua a lanciare appelli per una vasta azione antifascista in Italia per far cadere il regime del Duce<sup>103</sup>, e su "L'Unità" si parla delle sanzioni economiche contro l'Italia, decise a Ginevra il 7 ottobre 1935.<sup>104</sup> Se ne continua a parlare, mentre si nota un crescente malcontento in Italia per la guerra anche fra la borghesia<sup>105</sup>, e, pur lodando la misura presa dalla S.D.N., approvata da 54 stati, si dubita della reale applicazione delle sanzioni per i troppi contrasti fra le nazioni che le hanno decise, e quindi si parla di *sanzioni proletarie* (sabotaggio dei trasporti da e per l'Italia).<sup>106</sup> Infatti, i dubbi sulla S.D.N. restano, soprattutto sull'operatività delle misure, decisa il 18 novembre 1935, mentre si parla dei lavori del congresso di Bruxelles.<sup>107</sup> Ed essi verranno confermati, il 7 dicembre 1935, dal piano Hoare-Laval, visto come un premio all'aggressore italiano in difficoltà in Abissinia, su cui si scrive: "Gli imperialisti vogliono spezzettare l'Etiopia. Vogliono (...) salvare l'abominevole regime fascista la cui situazione (...) diventa ogni giorno più difficile. (...)".<sup>108</sup> Il P.C.d'I. coglie bene la vera natura del piano Hoare-Laval, espediente per salvare la faccia al fascismo italiano che ha problemi al fronte per la contro-offensiva etiopica, e che Mussolini è tentato di accettare anche se poi lo rifiuterà.<sup>109</sup> Tutto ciò, inoltre, convalida i dubbi sovietici di prima della guerra sulla

<sup>100</sup> Cfr. *Il Congresso degli italiani contro la guerra è convocato prt il 12-13 ottobre* (n.f.), in "L'Unità", 1935, 12. Su questa iniziativa – e su un telegramma di Georgij Dimitrov all'I.O.S. – cfr. G. Procacci, op.cit., pp. 152-155.

<sup>101</sup> Cfr. *Via dall'Africa! Via Mussolini!*, in "L'Unità", 1935, 12 e Luigi Gallo, *Il Congresso degli italiani contro la guerra fascista in Abissinia*, in "Lo Stato Operaio", 10 ottobre 1935, pp. 618-624. Sul Congresso di Bruxelles e la partecipazione del P.C.d'I. cfr. G. Procacci, op.cit., pp. 175-180.

<sup>102</sup> Sulla sostituzione di De Bono con Badoglio cfr. *La situazione in Africa Orientale* (n.f.), in "L'Unità", 1935, 14. Sul tema cfr. A. Del Boca, op.cit., p. 431-447; R. De Felice, op.cit., pp. 707-710.

<sup>103</sup> Cfr. *Fronte popolare per la pace e per la libertà* (n.f.), in "L'Unità", 1935, 14.

<sup>104</sup> Sulle sanzioni economiche della S.D.N. all'Italia cfr. A. Del Boca, op.cit., p. 423; R. De Felice, op.cit., pp. 694-696; G. Procacci, op.cit., p. 147.

<sup>105</sup> Cfr. *Fronte popolare per la pace e per la libertà*, art.cit., loc.cit.

<sup>106</sup> Cfr. *Le sanzioni contro il governo fascista hanno per iscopo di affrettare la fine della guerra* (n.f.), in "L'Unità", 1935, 14.

<sup>107</sup> Cfr. *Il responsabile delle sanzioni è il governo di Mussolini! Finisca la guerra! Deve essere il grido di tutto il popolo italiano*. Appello del Comitato del Congresso di Bruxelles, in "L'Unità", 1935, 15. Sui passi della S.D.N. cfr. A. Del Boca, op.cit., pp. 464-465; R. De Felice, op.cit., pp. 694-705; G. Procacci, op.cit., pp. 181-182.

<sup>108</sup> *Contro lo spezzettamento dell'Etiopia!* (Appello del CC del P.C.d'I.), in "L'Unità", 1935, 16. Sul piano Hoare-Laval cfr. A. Del Boca, op.cit., pp. 460-464; R. De Felice, op.cit., pp. 715-724; G. W. Baer, op.cit., p. 489. Per le reazioni internazionali ad esso cfr. G. Procacci, op.cit., pp. 207-214.

<sup>109</sup> Sulla contro-offensiva etiopica del dicembre 1935 cfr. A. Del Boca, op.cit., pp. 472-487. Sulle esitazioni di Mussolini ad accettare il piano Hoare-Laval cfr. R. De Felice, op.cit., pp. 720-723. Ma cfr. anche Denis Mack Smith, *Le guerre del Duce*, Milano, Mondadori, 1992, p. 89.

reale volontà di punire con sanzioni economiche un'aggressione fascista all'Etiopia.<sup>110</sup> Oltre a ciò, si nota che, forse anche grazie al piano Hoare-Laval, la guerra in Etiopia è ancora più cruenta poiché, all'inizio del 1936, su "L'Unità" si parla di un più largo uso di gas nel conflitto, scrivendo: "Il ricorso ai gas asfissianti e al bombardamento degli ospedali della Croce Rossa sono un segno che in alto loco prevarrebbe al tendenza al « tutto osare »".<sup>111</sup> Quindi, pur ritenendo la guerra d'Etiopia ormai *inarrestabile*, si denunciano crimini contro l'umanità come l'uso di gas e il bombardamento di istituzioni umanitarie.<sup>112</sup> Ma, al di là di queste scontate denunce, l'accento è posto sul disastro economico italiano per la guerra, nonché sul non dare alcun premio all'aggressore.<sup>113</sup> Si lanciano – anche se è inutile – nuovi appelli per scatenare una rivolta in Italia per abbattere il fascismo.<sup>114</sup> Ma, nonostante ciò, si parla ancora del conflitto italo-etiopeo, puntando su un'ormai improbabile sconfitta dell'Italia.<sup>115</sup> L'aggressione fascista all'Etiopia va fermata – a riprova si cita il minaccioso discorso del Duce agli studenti europei –<sup>116</sup> e il tema è ripreso in uno scritto dove si afferma che: "La disfatta (...) di Mussolini in Africa e la sua eliminazione dal potere faciliterà al popolo italiano il compito di (...) fattore di pace, ed eliminerà uno degli alleati dell'hitlerismo".<sup>117</sup> Si parla ora di nuovo della *Santa Alleanza* nazi-fascista, ma stavolta in modo reale, poiché Mussolini ha

<sup>110</sup> Tali dubbi furono espressi da Dimitrij Manuilskij – il più autorevole rappresentante sovietico del Comintern – nella relazione sul VII congresso dell'I.C. agli attivi del P.C.U.S. di Mosca e Leningrado (4-5 settembre 1935): in essa si diceva che di certo solo l'URSS avrebbe davvero applicato sanzioni economiche all'Italia fascista.

<sup>111</sup> *La minaccia di una catastrofe militare in Africa* (n.f.), in "L'Unità", 1936, 1. Sull'uso di aggressivi chimici – e di gas asfissianti – cfr. A. Del Boca, op.cit., pp. 481-497; R. De Felice, op.cit., p. 724. Ma sul problema cfr. Giorgio Rochat, *L'impiego dei gas nelle guerra d'Etiopia*, in AA.VV., *I gas di Mussolini*, op.cit., pp. 49-87; Ferdinando Pedriali, *Le armi chimiche in Africa Orientale: storia, tecnica, obiettivi, efficacia*, ivi, pp. 89-104; Angelo Del Boca, *Le fonti etiopiche e straniere sull'impiego dei gas*, ivi, pp. 117-131; Roberto Gentili, *La storiografia aeronautica e il problema dei gas*, ivi, pp. 133-144; Angelo Del Boca, *I telegrammi operativi di Mussolini*, ivi, pp. 145-164.

<sup>112</sup> Sui bombardamenti indiscriminati – anche con uso di gas – di istituzioni internazionali di pace cfr. A. Del Boca, op.cit., pp. 491-492.

<sup>113</sup> Cfr. Ruggero Grieco, *La guerra è la rovina economica dell'Italia*, in "L'Unità", 1936, 1; Id., *Salvare il paese, non i responsabili della guerra*, ivi; Giuseppe Di Vittorio, *Per la pace vera senza abnnsioni! e L'oro deve essere chiesto ai ricchi, non ai poveri!* (n.f.), ivi.

<sup>114</sup> *Chi sono i nemici dell'Italia?* (n.f.), in "L'Unità", 1936, 2.

<sup>115</sup> Cfr. *La salvezza del paese è nelle nostre mani*, in "Lo Stato Operaio", 1 gennaio 1936, pp. 5-13; *Che cos'è l'Abissinia* (n.f.), ivi, pp. 45-62; a. b. c., *Le condizioni e le difficoltà della campagna militare in Abissinia*, ivi, pp. 63-76; Riccardo Lovera, *Quali saranno le conseguenze delle sanzioni?*, ivi, pp. 77-86.

<sup>116</sup> Cfr. Ruggero Grieco, *Per la cessazione immediata della guerra africana? Per impedire la guerra mondiale!*, in "L'Unità", 1936, 3. Per lo stesso concetto cfr. *Pace immediata!* (n.f.), in "Lo Stato Operaio", 2 febbraio 1936, pp. 105-108 e V. Fioretti, *Le operazioni militari in Africa Orientale*, ivi, pp. 137-144.

<sup>117</sup> Ruggero Grieco, *Hitler minaccia la pace e l'URSS. Via dal potere Mussolini suo complice!*, in "L'Unità", 1936, 4.

tacitamente permesso a Hitler di rimilitarizzare la Renania, violando i trattati di Versailles e di Locarno.<sup>118</sup> Quindi, la guerra d'Etiopia è di nuovo vista come causa di un conflitto mondiale di cui la Renania è il prologo.<sup>119</sup> Sulla complicità di Mussolini con Hitler sui fatti renani – anche se le accuse al Duce paiono esagerate – si tornerà poco dopo<sup>120</sup>, e anche in seguito.<sup>121</sup> Ma il tema scompare presto da "L'Unità" per far posto a quello, centrale, della guerra d'Etiopia, ormai inarrestabile e che finirà bene per l'Italia, che fa ancora uso massiccio di gas.<sup>122</sup> Tuttavia, si spera ancora di fermare la guerra in corso creando in Italia un ampio fronte popolare antifascista, e perciò si intervista Don Luigi Sturzo, fondatore del Partito Popolare Italiano (prima organizzazione politica cattolica in Italia), esule in Inghilterra fin dall'ottobre 1924, in seguito al delitto Matteotti.<sup>123</sup> Nell'intervista – da diffondere anche fra i cattolici –, sulla guerra d'Etiopia Sturzo dice: "Che cosa (ne) penso (...) ? La guerra d'Africa è l'ultimo, speriamo, dei delitti (di) Mussolini (...) contro l'Italia. Non riesco a capire come mai gli elementi dell'industria, dello Stato Maggiore, della monarchia, i quali sono contro questa impresa pazzesca, non siano riusciti (...) ad impedire (...) il delitto (...). « Penso che Mussolini è vittima della sua politica fatta di minacce, di ricatti e di bluff (...) per nascondere il fallimento del suo regime. Forse (...) non voleva arrivare alla guerra. Ma poi, trovatosi in una situazione che non gli permetteva più di manovrare, dovette scatenare la guerra. (...) »" E Sturzo infine, individuate bene le *motivazioni africane* del Duce, si dice favorevole ad un fronte popolare antifascista in Italia purché non sia anti-religioso.<sup>124</sup> Anche tale prospettiva non muta però il quadro della situazione, in cui si profila la vittoria italiana in Etiopia, con l'unico spiraglio del successo elettorale del P.C.F. e del Fronte Popolare in Francia.<sup>125</sup> Un

<sup>118</sup> Sul tacito consenso del Duce alla mossa di Hitler e sulle divisioni da essa causate nel fascismo cfr. R. De Felice, op.cit., pp. 734-736. Sul riuscito – per l'inazione francese – *colpo di mano* nazista in Renania cfr. William L. Shirer, *Storia del Terzo Reich*, Torino, Einaudi, 1962, pp. 318-329. Per le reazioni francesi cfr. J.-B. Duroselle, op.cit., pp. 153-179 e, più in generale, William L. Shirer, *La caduta della Francia. Da Sedan all'occupazione nazista*, Torino, Einaudi, 1971, pp. 286-325. Sulla crisi renana cfr. anche *Salvare la pace e l'Italia!* (n.f.), in "Lo Stato Operaio", 3, marzo 1936, pp. 189-192.

<sup>119</sup> Il collegamento – sia pure indiretto – fra la crisi renana ed un'indesiderata – dal P.C.d'I. – pace di compromesso in Etiopia è in *La via della vittoria è quella della pace vera, senza annessioni* (n.f.), in "L'Unità", 1936, 4.

<sup>120</sup> Ruggero Grieco, *Mussolini prepara un nuovo macello*, in "L'Unità", 1936, 5.

<sup>121</sup> Cfr. *Per una politica estera del popolo italiano* (n.f.), in "Lo Stato Operaio", 4 aprile 1936, pp. 249-257: dura critica all'operato generale della S.D.N.

<sup>122</sup> Cfr. *La civiltà di Mussolini in Africa* (n.f.), in "L'Unità", 1936, 5: denuncia dell'uso, da parte italiana, di gas tossici sui civili etiopici. Sulle operazioni militari del gennaio-marzo 1936 cfr. A. Del Bova, op.cit., pp. 519-637.

<sup>123</sup> Sull'esilio di don Luigi Sturzo cfr. L. Salvatorelli – G. Mira, op.cit., p. 589. Sull'assassinio di Giacomo Matteotti cfr. Gaetano Arfè, *Storia del socialismo italiano 1892-1926*, Torino, Einaudi, 1977, pp. 363-364.

<sup>124</sup> Romano Cocchi, *Conversando con don Luigi Sturzo sul conflitto italo-etiopico, sulla situazione italiana e sul Fronte Popolare*, in "L'Unità", 1936, 5.

<sup>125</sup> Su questi avvenimenti cfr. Georges Lefranc, *Histoire du Front Populaire*, Paris, Payot, 1974, pp. 111-139; G. Caredda, op.cit., pp. 88-102.

nuovo appello per la fine della guerra pare ormai inutile<sup>126</sup>, poiché fra poco Addis-Abeba sarà occupata<sup>127</sup>, e allora si possono fare solo un bilancio dell'accaduto e alcune previsioni per il futuro: perciò, si afferma che il nuovo Impero è più un peso che un vantaggio per l'Italia, e che la guerra è stata possibile per la divisione del popolo italiano e, quindi, occorre "(...) popolarizzare la grande idea della (...) *riconciliazione nazionale* (...) " per creare un fronte popolare in Italia, anche con i fascisti delusi, per far cadere il regime del Duce.<sup>128</sup> Quest'ultimo tema – la divisione del popolo italiano che ha permesso la guerra – sarà poi ripreso<sup>129</sup>, ma si parla anche della brutta situazione dei lavoratori italiani in Abissinia<sup>130</sup> nonché dell'inizio della resistenza locale contro l'occupazione italiana, su cui si scrive: "(...) gli abissini organizzano numerosi focolai di resistenza alla occupazione italiana (...) nei territori conquistati." E, "(...) nelle regioni non (...) occupate, migliaia di armati tengono in iscacco le truppe italiane". Perciò "(...) il Corpo di spedizione italiano non è smobilitato, mentre nuove truppe partono (...). La guerriglia continua e continuerà per lungo tempo nell'Africa Orientale."<sup>131</sup> La previsione si rivelerà esatta. La guerriglia anti-italiana inizia infatti quando non tutta l'Etiopia è occupata e neanche pacificata. Del resto, la pacificazione del paese non avverrà mai poiché, nonostante la repressione italiana, la resistenza durerà fino alla caduta dell'Etiopia in mano inglese, nel novembre 1941. Gli Italiani però non lo sanno, e per anni ignoreranno che – come si è scritto – con la resistenza anti-italiana in Abissinia è iniziata la seconda guerra mondiale.<sup>132</sup> Tale consapevolezza però non appare sulla stampa del P.C.d'I., che fa solo un bilancio degli avvenimenti con eventuali lezioni per il futuro<sup>133</sup> anche se è fin troppo convinta che proprio la guerra d'Etiopia può causare un nuovo conflitto mondiale<sup>134</sup> e che solo l'unità del popolo italiano può evitarlo al paese.<sup>135</sup> Qui finiscono le riflessioni del P.C.d'I. sulla guerra italo-etiope: se si constata il fallimento dell'azione operaia internazionale per fermare l'avventura africana del Duce, essa – e i metodi criminali usati per concluderla – hanno aperto gli occhi all'opinione pubblica mondiale. Da ora in poi, l'opposizione alle

<sup>126</sup> Il testo dell'appello del P.C.d'I. è in "L'Unità", 1936, 6.

<sup>127</sup> Sulle ultime battaglie in Africa Orientale e la caduta di Addis-Abeba cfr. A. Del Boca, op.cit., pp. 638-706.

<sup>128</sup> Per queste considerazioni cfr. lo scritto – senza titolo – di Ruggero Grieco, in "L'Unità", 1936, 7.

<sup>129</sup> Cfr. *Dopo la presa di Addis Abeba* (n.f.), in "L'Unità", 1936, 7.

<sup>130</sup> Cfr. *Si prepara una nuova schiavitù per i lavoratori italiani che andassero in Abissinia* (n.f.), in "L'Unità", 1936, 8.

<sup>131</sup> *La resistenza degli abissini alla occupazione militare italiana* (n.f.), in "L'Unità", 1936, 8. Sull'inizio della guerriglia abissina contro gli italiani cfr. A. Del Boca, op.cit., pp. 725-731 e Richard Pankhurst, *Come il popolo etiopico resistette all'occupazione e alla repressione da parte dell'Italia fascista*, in AA.VV., *Le guerre coloniali del fascismo*, op.cit., pp. 256-287.

<sup>132</sup> Su questo tema cfr. Zaude Hailemariam, *La vera data d'inizio della seconda guerra mondiale*, in AA.VV., *Le guerre coloniali del fascismo*, op.cit., pp. 288-313.

<sup>133</sup> Cfr. in questo senso *Dopo Addis Abeba* (n.f.), in "Lo Stato Operaio", 5 maggio 1936, pp. 313-317.

<sup>134</sup> Cfr. *La vittoria militare in Africa e la minaccia di una guerra mondiale* (n.f.), in "Lo Stato Operaio", 6 giugno 1936, pp. 318-324.

<sup>135</sup> Cfr. *La riconciliazione del popolo italiano è la condizione per salvare il nostro paese dalla catastrofe* (n.f.), in "Lo Stato Operaio", 6 giugno 1936, pp. 377-386.

imprese del Duce – e del Führer – non sarà più monopolio del movimento operaio che, mentre Mussolini proclama l'Impero già fin dal 5 maggio 1936<sup>136</sup>, ha avuto una lezione per la prossima prova che lo aspetta: la Spagna.<sup>137</sup> Ma è anche certo che i governi occidentali – soprattutto quelli di Londra e di Parigi – non hanno capito che la *mano libera* lasciata al Duce in Abissinia per accontentare i suoi appetiti imperiali causerà in Europa una serie di crisi che porteranno poi alla seconda guerra mondiale.<sup>138</sup> Si avvereranno così le peggiori previsioni del P.C.d'I.: Mussolini trascinerà infatti in questo conflitto anche l'Italia, e causerà la catastrofe del paese nonché la caduta dello stesso fascismo. Solo che, per quest'ultima, si dovrà aspettare il 25 luglio 1943.

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<sup>136</sup> Su questo punto cfr. A. Del Boca, op.cit., pp. 707-751.

<sup>137</sup> Per questa notazione cfr. G. Procacci, op.cit., p. 226.

<sup>138</sup> Cfr. in questo senso, Max Gallo, *L'affaire d'Éthiopie aux origines de la deuxième guerre mondiale*, Paris, Le Centurion, 1967.





## *Relaciones hispano-italianas durante la segunda guerra mundial*

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El presente artículo quisiera presentar la disertación defendida y aprobada en 2005 en la Facultad de Filosofía y Letras de la Universidad de Szeged.<sup>1</sup> Este breve resumen concentra no sólo en la exposición temática de la disertación sino quiere hacer conocer con los lectores los objetivos del trabajo, las fuentes utilizadas y, además, destacar los nuevos aportes de la tesis y llamar la atención sobre algunas posibilidades para las investigaciones posteriores.

### *Objetivos de la investigación*

Las relaciones de los dos países mediterráneos por supuesto se remontan a tiempos más remotos que los años de la Segunda Guerra Mundial. A lo largo de la historia España e Italia muchas veces establecieron contactos dinásticos, políticos, culturales, económicos o estratégicos, sin embargo nuestra investigación abarca sólo el período entre 1939 y 1945.

Ya muchos historiadores analizaron desde diferentes aspectos los años de la Segunda Guerra Mundial. A pesar de que también la disertación se concentra en estos años, nuestro objetivo es más bien examinar algunos aspectos hasta ahora bastante descuidados de la contienda, y llamar la atención, en primer lugar, a España, a Italia y a la presentación de las relaciones diplomáticas entre los dos países.

El primer objetivo de la elección del tema lo podemos justificar en el hecho de que este territorio es apenas investigado dentro de la bibliografía de la Segunda Guerra Mundial. Otro motivo es aquel desequilibrio que pudimos descubrir durante la investigación en la proporción de la bibliografía — nacional e internacional — referente a Italia y España. Mientras en el caso del primer país el examen de los años de la guerra recibe mucha atención, en cuanto a España este tema queda bastante omiso. Eso es debido a la diferente posición de los dos países frente al conflicto mundial. La atención de los historiadores se dirigió más bien hacia las potencias beligerantes, mientras “los neutrales menores” quedaron sólo personajes secundarios tanto de la guerra como de los libros de

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<sup>1</sup> El tribunal fue compuesto por el Prof. Dr. László J. Nagy (presidente); el Prof. Dr. Iván Harsányi (oponente); el Prof. Dr. Tibor Szabó (oponente), la Prof. Dra. Ágnes Judit Szilágyi (vocal) y el Prof. Dr. Alessandro Rosselli (vocal). El tutor de la autora era el Prof. Dr. Ádám Anderle.

historia. Sin embargo España, por su herencia política precedente a la Segunda Guerra Mundial (la Guerra Civil), por sus complejas relaciones con los beligerantes y por su situación geoestratégica merece mayor atención.

Se puede motivar el desequilibrio mencionado dentro de la bibliografía también con la permanencia de los regímenes de Mussolini y de Franco. Después de la muerte de Mussolini, en la Italia democrática no fue tabú hablar sobre el pasado reciente. Aunque los archivos no se abrieron en seguida para los investigadores, por lo menos se podía hablar de ello y de la política. A diferencia de la situación italiana, en el régimen español que sobrevivió al conflicto mundial y permaneció hasta la muerte del Generalísimo (1975), muchos temas quedaron en una lista prohibida, o la mayoría de las obras historiográficas tenían un fuerte tono apologético. Así, por parte española, las investigaciones pudieron empezar sólo durante la década de los 80. Pero éstas se concentraron más bien en la Guerra Civil, precedente a la dictadura, en la presentación histórica del régimen franquista de casi 40 años, en el dilema de la continuidad y la forma de estado, en las preguntas de la transición democrática y, comprensiblemente, el tema de la Segunda Guerra Mundial, la posición española y las relaciones italianas durante ésta recibió poca atención. Éste último tema — sobre todo en las obras dedicadas al examen de la política exterior del régimen franquista<sup>2</sup> —, si inevitablemente está presente, los historiadores preferentemente redujeron su presentación sólo a subcapítulos.<sup>3</sup> Asimismo, los libros sobre la política exterior mussoliniana, en cuanto a las relaciones entre los dos países, examinaron más profundamente sólo la cuestión de la intervención italiana en la Guerra Civil española. En estas obras, las relaciones durante la Segunda Guerra Mundial son apenas mencionadas, o como máximo, las mencionan a propósito del encuentro de Bordighera entre Franco y Mussolini (1941).

Las relaciones italo-españolas durante la Segunda Guerra Mundial fueron investigadas en su profundidad por primera vez por historiadores españoles<sup>4</sup> en los años 80, desde entonces pero, gracias a la accesibilidad a los documentos de los archivos, nuestros conocimientos en este tema se ampliaron.<sup>5</sup> Aunque las investigaciones continúan hoy día también, muchas veces podemos descubrir una característica común de estas obras en el examen de la relación entre los dos países: intentan presentar los mayores problemas del periodo a través de la figura de los dos dictadores, Franco y Mussolini. Este hecho se manifiesta muchas veces ya en el título de estas obras. Por este motivo, en el título de la

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<sup>2</sup> José Mario Armero: *La política exterior de Franco*, Barcelona, 1978.; Manuel Espadas Burgos: *Franquismo y política exterior*, Madrid, 1988.; Javier Tusell, Juan Avilés Farré, Rosa María Pardo Sanz: *La política exterior de España en el siglo XX*, Madrid, 2000.

<sup>3</sup> La primera excepción de esta crítica fue la obra de Javier Tusell: *Franco, España y la II Guerra Mundial. Entre el Eje y la neutralidad*, Madrid, 1995. En ésta, como muestra ya el título, el historiador español examina ya detalladamente y con crítica — debido a los archivos recién abiertos — la actitud de España durante la Segunda Guerra Mundial.

<sup>4</sup> Javier Tusell, Genoveva García Queipo de Llano: *Franco y Mussolini. La política española durante la Segunda Guerra Mundial*, Barcelona, 1985.

<sup>5</sup> Entre las obras de los investigadores italianos hay que destacar el libro de Massimiliano Guderzo: *Madrid e l'arte della diplomazia. L'incognita spagnola nella seconda guerra mondiale*, Firenze, 1995.

disertación, tratamos de evitar la mención de los nombres de los dictadores, visto que, al examinar las relaciones italo-españolas, la Segunda Guerra Mundial, como fondo, merece prioridad. Eso no quiere decir que dudemos en el protagonismo indiscutible del *Duce* italiano y el Generalísimo español en los años 1939-1945 en la vida política de sus países respectivos, pero no queremos enfocar el problema a través de una interpretación o una comparación biográfica. Nuestra intención es más bien presentar este tema desde el aspecto diplomático y político-histórico.<sup>6</sup>

Otro rasgo característico de las obras historiográficas hasta entonces publicadas es que en éstas la protagonista es la Segunda Guerra Mundial, mientras los dos países mediterráneos son simplemente *personajes secundarios*, y, además, a España, dado que no se hizo beligerante, se la menciona más bien como una *comparsa*.

En la tesis quisiéramos cambiar este punto de vista, es decir intentamos enfocar las relaciones italo-españolas, a las cuales la guerra sirve de *fondo*.

Otro objetivo de la investigación ha sido la confrontación, o mejor dicho, el complemento de los dos grupos más importantes de la documentación, la italiana y la española, con los documentos del Archivo Nacional Húngaro. Las investigaciones proseguidas en éste último posibilitaron una perspectiva más amplia sobre las relaciones entre los dos países mediterráneos.

#### *Fuentes utilizadas*

Proseguimos investigaciones en tres archivos. Nuestra primera fuente fue la documentación del archivo del Ministerio de Asuntos Exteriores de Italia (*Archivio Storico-Diplomatico del Ministero degli Affari Esteri*, ASMAE), concerniente a la Segunda Guerra Mundial y a las relaciones entre España e Italia durante este período. Esta documentación se halla en la colección *Serie Affari Politici 1931-45*, bajo la entrada *Spagna*. Estos legajos, llamados en italiano *buste*, llevan la abreviación "b.". Fuera de los legajos referentes a los años entre 1939 y 1945 (b. 52-67.) examinamos también otros documentos (b. 68-94.).

Otro grupo de fuentes en el que nos apoyamos fue el *Archivo General del Ministerio de Asuntos Exteriores* de España (AMAE). Aquí encontramos una documentación valiosa en los legajos del *Archivo Renovado* referentes a la Segunda Guerra Mundial. En el archivo español los documentos no tienen indicación peculiar, es decir se los distingue, fuera de la signatura del legajo ("R.") y del expediente ("exp."), a base de los datos de

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<sup>6</sup> Los historiadores húngaros apenas mencionan las relaciones hispano-italianas durante el conflicto mundial. Nacieron algunas obras comparativas, sin embargo en éstas es más fuerte la interpretación biográfica de los dictadores. (Ormos Mária, Harsányi Iván: *Mussolini-Franco*, Budapest, 2001.) Se puede encontrar obras donde el *Duce* italiano aparece en comparación con Hitler. (Gárdos Miklós: *A panoptikum raktára*, Budapest, 1980.) A este grupo pertenecen también investigaciones que examinan ya más profundamente la posición española ante la guerra, pero destacando sólo las relaciones hispano-alemanas. (Gömöri Endre: *A „vezércsel”. Franco és Hitler: a hintapolitika iskolája*, Budapest, 1989.)

registro de su fecha de expedición. Pero estos datos no siempre perduraron, así no todos los documentos los llevan. Esta documentación — en su cantidad — es menor que la del archivo italiano, debido a que algunos períodos de la política exterior (por ejemplo el ministerio de Ramón Serrano Suñer) en cuanto a la documentación escrita son bastante incompletos.

El tercer grupo de fuentes fue la documentación del Archivo Nacional Húngaro (MOL), referente a nuestro tema (los documentos generales y reservados del Departamento Político del Ministerio de Asuntos Exteriores de Hungría, con signaturas "K63" y "K64"). En la documentación húngara pasamos algunos legajos que no tratan directamente con Italia o España, pero en algunas referencias de cada documento encontramos informaciones importantes en cuanto a la posición de los dos países frente al conflicto.

Hay que mencionar también entre las fuentes primarias los documentos ya publicados. Entre éstos, de parte italiana, destacamos los volúmenes de *Documenti Diplomatici Italiani (DDI)*, referentes al período (*Serie VIII, IX, X*).

De los documentos españoles publicados utilizamos los volúmenes de *Bases documentales de la España Contemporánea*, y, aunque menos abarcador, pero asimismo valioso, de *Documentos Inéditos para la Historia del Generalísimo Franco*.

Aparte de la publicada documentación italiana y española pudimos utilizar algunas colecciones de documentos, editadas ya en húngaro, y nos ayudaron también algunas fuentes en forma digitalizada, accesibles ya en Internet. En el caso de éstas últimas, cuando fue posible, siempre confrontamos las versiones electrónicas con las impresas.

No se puede excluir de las fuentes tampoco los diarios y las memorias de los protagonistas (ministros de asuntos exteriores, embajadores) de la época. Sin embargo, en el empleo de este grupo de fuentes, no podemos olvidar que estas obras muchas veces contienen elementos subjetivos, y por eso no podemos dejar que éstos hagan distorsiones en la realidad histórica e historiográfica.

También la prensa de la época podrá formar una fuente valiosa que, además, frecuentemente aparece como tema de investigaciones independientes. Justamente por este motivo no nos encargamos de esta tarea. A veces hacemos referencia a algunos artículos publicados en la prensa española o italiana, pero sólo basándonos en la bibliografía secundaria. También esta deficiencia de la tesis expresa que las investigaciones no han terminado todavía.

### *La estructura de la tesis*

En el primer capítulo intentamos resumir los antecedentes de las relaciones italo-españolas durante la Segunda Guerra Mundial. Destacamos dos momentos importantes: la Segunda República española y la Guerra Civil.

También el segundo capítulo se concentra todavía en los meses precedentes al conflicto mundial. En unos subcapítulos analizamos el recién creado gobierno español y su posición internacional. Dedicamos dos subcapítulos a la presentación de dos visitas de

gran importancia desde punto de vista de la política exterior de ambos países: la visita de Ramón Serrano Suñer a Italia y el viaje a España de Galeazzo Ciano.

La siguiente parte de la tesis examina las relaciones desde el estallido de la guerra hasta la beligerancia de Italia (septiembre de 1939 – junio de 1940). La cuestión central es qué efecto tuvieron la neutralidad española y la no beligerancia italiana por un lado sobre las relaciones entre los dos países, y por otro lado sobre la actitud de Franco y Mussolini frente al conflicto. En estos meses se nota la fuerte influencia de la posición italiana sobre la española: en el mismo día cuando Mussolini declaró la intervención italiana, Franco conmutó la neutralidad por la no beligerancia. Este paso causó la impresión en los Aliados de como si también España marchara hacia la guerra.

*El fondo de la no beligerancia de España* es el título del siguiente capítulo. En esta parte se nota tal vez — que al analizar las relaciones el enfoque español siempre recibe un acento más fuerte — cuyo motivo ya hemos mencionado más arriba. Después de la intervención italiana, en el momento del colapso de Francia, España ocupó Tánger, razonando aquel paso que según el estatuto internacional de la zona sólo España, siendo no beligerante, podía asegurar el control de la ciudad. A pesar de eso los españoles fueron motivados no tanto por el respeto del derecho internacional sino más bien por las aspiraciones territoriales en África que siempre tenían prioridad en la política exterior española. Y así España no habría podido encontrar mejor momento para realizar estos proyectos: el 14 de junio de 1940 Francia no era capaz de defender sus colonias, es decir, ante España se brindó una excepcional ocasión en el Marruecos francés.

Junto a la presentación de la intervención italiana y la reacción española nos ocupamos de un problema concerniente a la política interior de España, cuyo efecto, sin embargo, tuvo importancia desde el punto de vista de la política exterior. Es decir, la posesión de la cartera de Asuntos Exteriores: con el relevo del general Juan Beigbeder, ocupó su puesto Ramón Serrano Suñer, conocido italófilo y llamado por Galeazzo Ciano como "*l'uomo d'Italia*".

En estos meses junto a la influencia española fue bastante fuerte la de Alemania. Para Hitler la importancia de España por su posición geoestratégica aumentó en los últimos meses de 1940. Las ideas de Hitler referentes a Gibraltar cristalizaron en el *Plan Félix*. Para discutir esta cuestión el *Führer* alemán se encontró con el Generalísimo español por primera y última vez. Sin embargo, el encuentro de Hendaya fue infructífero, así la operación planeada por Hitler para enero de 1941 fracasó por la actitud española. Analizamos este tema en un subcapítulo del cuarto capítulo y, estrechamente a esto, presentamos también los proyectos de Franco referentes al Peñón. A primera vista podrá parecer superflua la breve presentación de las relaciones hispano-alemanas desde el punto de vista del tema central de la tesis, sin embargo, opinamos que eso no es una pura digresión visto que merece la pena observar las relaciones italo-españolas también en una dimensión más amplia. La posición española fue influida no sólo por la actitud italiana sino también por la alemana. Después de que Hitler no lograra convencer a Franco de que diera un paso decisivo, el dictador alemán quiso utilizar la mediación de Mussolini para persuadir al Generalísimo. También por este motivo el breve análisis de las relaciones hispano-alemanas no puede ser marginado.

El quinto capítulo de la disertación examina el papel mediador antes mencionado del *Duce*. La cumbre de este intento fue el encuentro entre Franco y Mussolini en Bordighera, en febrero de 1941. Sin embargo el dictador italiano no logró cumplir su misión, pero hay que añadir que tampoco hizo muchos esfuerzos. Mientras Hitler esperaba que Mussolini convenciera a Franco sobre la intervención española en la guerra, Franco pensaba que el *Duce* sería su portavoz hacia el *Führer*, transmitiéndole las exigencias españolas que fueron enunciadas en el encuentro como las condiciones de la futura y posible beligerancia de España. La sola importancia de la cumbre de Bordighera es que ésta fue la única consulta personal de los dos dictadores mediterráneos, pero, en cuanto a su eficacia, no tuvo gran trascendencia. En la posición española prácticamente no cambió nada.

En un subcapítulo mencionamos también las incertidumbres de la política interior española de 1941. La consecuencia de éstas fue la larga crisis de gobierno que condujo a la destitución de Serrano Suñer en el otoño de 1942. Sin embargo, todavía en 1941, el *cuñadísimo*<sup>7</sup>, a pesar de las continuas críticas contra él y la antipatía de la mayoría de los otros ministros hacia él, quedó en su puesto. Con la apertura del frente soviético, en verano de 1941, también la posición española se modificó. Aunque Franco subrayó que con la declaración de la *beligerancia moral* de España su país sólo manifestó su posición contra el comunismo y trabó batalla sólo contra éste, y que eso no significaba la intervención efectiva de España. De ahí nació la teoría de *las dos guerras* que más tarde, con la beligerancia de los Estados Unidos, se extendió a la de *las tres guerras*. La *beligerancia moral* de España se manifestó con el envío de la División Azul al frente oriental.

El sexto capítulo se dedica a algunos problemas de la vida política española tanto interior como exterior. A la primera pertenece la presentación de la intensificación del movimiento de los monárquicos españoles y la debilitación de poder de Serrano Suñer.

El canto del cisne de Suñer fue el encuentro de Livorno entre él y Galeazzo Ciano, en el verano de 1942 donde el alejamiento de los dos políticos — sobre todo por parte de Ciano — era ya evidente.

En la política interior española la bomba explotó — en sentido concreto y abstracto también — con el atentado de Begoña, en agosto de 1942. La tensión entre los militares y los falangistas llegó a tal punto que Franco ya no pudo retrasar la solución de la crisis de gobierno. En el gabinete nuevo el cambio más importante sucedió sin duda en la cartera de Asuntos Exteriores, con el nombramiento del general Gómez-Jordana.

El cambio de rumbo de la política española se hizo inequívoco después del desembarco de los Aliados en el norte de África. Con el *giro-Jordana* España se esforzó volver a la neutralidad, aunque, hacia Italia (y el Eje), quería comunicar que la política exterior no cambiaría en el futuro tampoco con el nuevo ministro. Los aliados sin embargo consideraron esperanzador el cambio español visto que el conde Jordana era monárquico y conocido anglófilo.

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<sup>7</sup> Serrano Suñer fue el cuñado de Franco. Por eso, con un tono despectivo, muchas veces le llamaban con la forma superlativa de la palabra.

Los capítulos 7-9 presentan las relaciones entre España e Italia después de la caída del fascismo. Se ocupan de la resonancia española del fracaso de Mussolini, de la capitulación italiana y de la declaración de guerra de Italia a la Alemania nazi.

La parte más extensa de la tesis es el capítulo 8. La Italia partida en dos también en sus relaciones diplomáticas funcionó como dos estados independientes. Los territorios meridionales y centrales estaban bajo la dirección del gobierno de Badoglio y el control de los Aliados, mientras en la Italia del Norte bajo la conducta de Mussolini y el mando alemán nació un gobierno títere con el nombre de la *Repubblica Social Italiana* (RSI). También el título del mismo capítulo quiere manifestar la hesitación y la duplicidad que determinaron las relaciones hispano-italianas durante los últimos dos años de la guerra mundial. Dentro del tema de la diplomacia doble presentamos el dilema español entorno al reconocimiento de la RSI y la actividad ilegal de la representación disidente de Mussolini que pudo trabajar junto a la embajada de la Italia monárquica. El representante de ésta última fue Giacomo Paulucci di Calboli que, apoyado por los diplomáticos anglosajones (Carlton J. H. Hayes, Samuel Hoare), expresó casi sin cesar su protesta contra la actividad del agente disidente, Eugenio Morreale, permitida por el gobierno español. Sin embargo estas protestas no tuvieron efecto alguno y la presentación doble siguió existiendo en territorio español hasta la muerte de Mussolini.

Asimismo también en Italia nació una representación doble. Bajo este aspecto examinamos las posibilidades de la embajada española en Roma, confiada al encargado de negocios, Eduardo García Comín, después de la partida del embajador Raimundo Fernández Cuesta. García Comín en su trabajo tuvo que seguir las instrucciones de Domingo de las Bárcenas, embajador español ante la Santa Sede. Paralelamente con eso, no quedó sin representación española tampoco la Italia septentrional: allí, el cónsul de Milán, Fernando Chantal, se encargó del mantenimiento de los contactos entre los dos estados.

El caso de los buques italianos, mercantes y de guerra, fondeados en puertos españoles después del armisticio italiano, formó parte también de esta diplomacia dual. Por el cisma político de Italia eso fue un dilema diplomático y jurídico muy complejo para España. La cuestión que a cuál de los dos estados italianos pertenecen jurídicamente estos barcos y cuál de ellos tenía derecho de reivindicarlos perduró hasta enero de 1945 y disturbó las relaciones diplomáticas.

Visto que la diplomacia dual caracterizó las relaciones italo-españolas en el período 1943-1945, también la tesis dedica dos capítulos a este problema. Esto es motivado no sólo por la complejidad del problema, sino también por la muerte inesperada de Gómez-Jordana advenida en agosto de 1944. El sucesor de Jordana fue José Félix de Lequerica y Erquiza, antes embajador ante el gobierno de Vichy, que — como herencia de su antecesor — tuvo que solucionar la cuestión delicada de los buques italianos. Durante el ministerio de Lequerica siguió trabajando en España la red de agentes de Morreale, y el representante disidente anunció la disolución de las oficinas de este sistema sólo a la muerte de Mussolini. Además presentamos el papel del cónsul español de Milán en los últimos días del *Duce* italiano.

En el último subcapítulo de esta parte examinamos, desde la perspectiva de las relaciones italo-españolas, la actitud de España frente al holocausto y la salvación de los

judíos. Las acciones de los diplomáticos españoles hoy día ya son bastante conocidas entre los historiadores. Gracias al trabajo abnegado de estos diplomáticos miles de judíos pudieron salvarse de los horrores de los campos de exterminio nazis y de la muerte segura. Aunque la diplomacia española en Italia — según la documentación de los archivos — fue menos afectada en esta misión, opinamos que merece por lo menos mencionar este tema también.

Los capítulos 3-9 se concentran en las relaciones italo-españolas siguiendo la cronología de la Segunda Guerra Mundial. En algunos subcapítulos se hacen breves digresiones, mencionando unos acontecimientos destacados de la contienda, pero la omisión de éstos dificultaría el entendimiento de la posición de España e Italia ante el conflicto. En algunos capítulos también los problemas de la política interior ocupan un lugar destacado — por ejemplo, en el caso español tal es la cuestión de la restauración o el incidente de Begoña, mientras, en Italia, la presentación más detallada del Gran Consejo Fascista —; pero todos éstos tienen relación e interacción directas con la política exterior, así su omisión haría divagado el razonamiento de la tesis.

La última parte de la disertación examina las relaciones diplomáticas entre España e Italia ya en la fase final de la guerra y el período de la paz. La actividad de dos diplomáticos, Tommaso Gallarati Scotti y José Antonio de Sangróniz y Castro recibe mayor acento en este capítulo. Junto a la misión cultural de Gallarati Scotti la tesis presenta también el acuerdo comercial entre los dos países que fue ratificado gracias a los esfuerzos de los diplomáticos mencionados. Sin embargo, su realización práctica ya se encontró con muchos obstáculos.

Como es sabido, las sanciones de la ONU fueron adoptadas también por Italia, así, con la salida de Gallarati Scotti de la capital española, las relaciones diplomáticas entre los dos países se rompieron después de diciembre de 1946. Italia, que eligió la democracia, y la España expulsada de la política internacional por un tiempo, avanzaron por caminos divergentes y sólo en 1951, con el nombramiento del nuevo embajador italiano, Francesco Maria Taliani De Marchio, empezó de nuevo el acercamiento entre los dos estados mediterráneos. Esta etapa ya abre un nuevo capítulo en la historia de las relaciones diplomáticas.

En el epílogo de la disertación, en vez de repetir algunos pensamientos, buscamos la respuesta a dos preguntas. La primera es: *¿Qué motivó en realidad las relaciones hispano-italianas?* Más simplificada: *¿Qué esperaba Mussolini de España, y, al contrario, para que sirvió Italia en los planes de Franco?*

La otra pregunta que plantea la parte final de la tesis es que *¿España fue verdaderamente neutral en la Segunda Guerra Mundial?* Los historiadores disienten en esta cuestión, sin embargo nuestra opinión es que no fue neutral. La justificación de esto también se encuentra en la conclusión.

La lista de las fuentes y la bibliografía de las obras consultadas cierran la disertación.



*Nuevos aportes de la tesis y posibilidades para investigaciones posteriores*

El tema de la disertación es un campo apenas investigado en la historiografía internacional. El examen de las relaciones italo-españolas está presente más bien con el motivo de la Guerra Civil española.<sup>8</sup>

Muchos historiadores analizaron la Italia beligerante en la Segunda Guerra Mundial, así en este territorio la tesis ofrece pocas novedades. Sin embargo pensamos que la presentación de la Italia del período entre 1939 y 1945 desde el enfoque español será una novedad entre las investigaciones.

Al analizar la Segunda Guerra Mundial desde el punto de vista español en general los investigadores buscan la respuesta a la siguiente pregunta: ¿A qué fue debido que España pudo quedar neutral durante el conflicto? Otro dilema formaba parte de esta pregunta: ¿España fue verdaderamente neutral en la Segunda Guerra Mundial? La opinión de los historiadores en la respuesta a ésta no es homogénea. Durante muchos años perduró la interpretación según la cual la prudencia de Franco salvó a los españoles de la beligerancia. Esta teoría fue defendida por los historiadores franquistas, sin embargo, este mito de Franco, creado por ellos, hoy ya parece derrocado. Las investigaciones recientes muestran que Franco sí que quería entrar (más veces) en la guerra, pero las circunstancias obstaculizaron este paso. Por eso, según nuestra opinión, presentar a Franco como un hombre de estado pacifista o neutral resultaría una imagen deformada y la tesis intenta aportar novedades en la presentación de lo opuesto a esta imagen.

La cuestión central de los capítulos 7-8-9, la problemática de la diplomacia dual, es también un territorio bastante omiso en la bibliografía. La tesis, con abundante documentación de los archivos, intenta ofrecer nuevas informaciones también en este tema.

La disertación a través de las relaciones de los dos países quiere dar un panorama sobre la Guerra Mundial. Eso puede formar una novedad visto que en las obras sobre la Segunda Guerra Mundial los acontecimientos bélicos y las relaciones entre los beligerantes reciben mayor acento. En éstas, los países no beligerantes, por supuesto, no pueden desempeñar *el protagonismo*.

Además de que los historiadores húngaros no investigaron este tema en su profundidad, la tesis quisiera presentar novedades también en la confrontación y en el complemento de las fuentes españolas e italianas (AMAE, ASMAE) con las húngaras (MOL). La combinación de estos grupos de fuentes hace posible que enfoquemos el tema por lo menos desde tres puntos de vista.

En la presentación de las fuentes hemos mencionado que la prensa de aquel entonces no forma parte de nuestra investigación. Las alusiones a unos artículos de prensa las hicimos apoyándonos en la bibliografía secundaria. Esta deficiencia de la tesis da posibilidad para investigaciones ulteriores.

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<sup>8</sup> Los resultados de las últimas investigaciones sobre este tema: véase Morten Heiberg: *Emperadores del Mediterráneo. Franco, Mussolini y la Guerra Civil española*, Barcelona, 2003.

Sobre la actitud de España durante la contienda tuvo gran influencia, junto a la Italia mussoliniana, también el vecino peninsular, Portugal. La disertación menciona varias veces a Salazar y hace referencias a las relaciones luso-españolas. Así, consideramos un tema interesante también el examen más profundo de esta relación (con la ayuda de la documentación de archivos portugueses), sobre todo porque en esta relación se podría conocer los contactos entre dos países neutrales que, sin embargo, practicaron e interpretaron la neutralidad de maneras bien diversas.

La doble diplomacia española frente a Italia entre 1943 y 1945 da posibilidad para la investigación de paralelos nuevos. Por un lado, se podría examinar cómo solucionaron este problema los otros estados alineados (o satélites) del Eje. Por otro lado, sería una comparación interesante investigar la situación de la representación francesa que, además, era más compleja que la italiana (Pétain, de Gaulle, Giraud). Desde aquí también el tema de la diplomacia franco-española y luso-francesa, ambas de más niveles (oficial y oficiosa)<sup>9</sup>, y su confrontación merecerían atención.

El último capítulo de la tesis menciona las relaciones diplomáticas entre España e Italia en la posguerra. El conocimiento más profundo de este período merece la atención de los historiadores también porque examinaría las relaciones de tales países que en el pasado estaban muy cerca, pero, después de 1945, eligieron caminos muy diferentes en la cambiada atmósfera internacional.

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<sup>9</sup> Las investigaciones recientes en este tema: véase Helena Pinto Janeiro: *Salazar és Pétain*, Budapest, 2004.

## *Documents about the Story of the Hungarian-Libyan diplomatic connections*

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The aim of this study is to introduce sources that came to existence during the official and non-official negotiations between Hungary and Libya started at the end of the 1950s. In the mirror of these we can get an objective picture about the steps of the Hungarian diplomacy towards the Libyan partner.

This work used mainly those diplomatic documents from the National Archives of Hungary that have reference to Libya. Most of the documents are from the State Department and from the embassy of the People's Republic of Hungary in Cairo. Furthermore, some documents are from the Washington, Moscow and Belgrade embassies of the People's Republic of Hungary<sup>1</sup>.

### *The formation of the independent Libya*

After the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War a plan was born for rebuilding the independence of Libya. Concrete steps were only made at the time of signing the Paris peace treaty. In February of 1947 Libya was declared to become a United Nations trust territory.

The period between 1947 and 1949 was spent with negotiations of the great powers. England and Italy and even the Soviet Union were trying to get right for administering the area.

However these negotiations did not lead to any results.

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<sup>1</sup> Before 1945, the amount of documents about Libya found in the National Archives of Hungary (hence fore abbreviated as MOL) is small. All the documents referring to the area forms mainly the Italian material until 1945 (MOL K63 Olaszország). Of course this is explained by the historical past of the country.

Documents referring to Libya after 1945 can be found at scores MOL KÜM KIS ORSZÁGOK LÍBIA 1945–1964 TÜK XIX-J-1-j and MOL KÜM KIS ORSZÁGOK LÍBIA 1945–1964 ADMIN XIX-J-1-j until 1964.

Documents referring to Libya after 1964 can be found at scores MOL KÜM LÍBIA/YEAR/TÜK XIX-J-1-j and MOL KÜM LÍBIA/YEAR/ADMIN XIX-J-1-j in an annual disassembly.

Seeing the helplessness of the great powers the United Nations made a resolution about the independence of Libya at its fourth session on November 21, 1949. This resolution had to be brought to effect until January 1, 1952.<sup>2</sup>

On December 24, 1951, the country became a constitutional monarchy named as The United Kingdom of Libya. The head of the state was King Idris I., head of the Senussis.<sup>3</sup>

The artificially made state seemed to be the poorest and least capable of living state at that time. Until the start of the oil searching, the main source of income of the country was the rent for military bases, and the foreign financial support that mostly came from the USA and from Great Britain.<sup>4</sup> The income from several taxes and additions contributed to this. The GDP was only 36 dollars in 1951. Old iron collected from the battle-fields and esparto grass produced the bigger part of the export of the country.

So it can be stated that at the beginning of the 1950s Libya was characterized by a strong commitment towards the western powers both in political and economic sense. Though from the middle of the decade the new state started to participate in the international political life more and more actively and covered a devious distance at the imagined international scene.<sup>5</sup> As a result of the opening the country participated at the Bandung conference and preferred the politics of non-commitment. The country formed diplomatic connections with numerous socialist nations.<sup>6</sup>

*The beginnings of Hungarian-Libyan negotiations and the admission of diplomatic connections*

Hungarian-Libyan connections cannot be said to be active in the 1950s, they were only formal.<sup>7</sup>

By the end of the 1950s, kind of political exploratory talks started between the two countries. The first searchable writing certifies that in February-March of 1958 Libya turned to the Washington ambassador of Hungary asking him to support the admission of Libya into the Executive Commission of the UNESCO.<sup>8</sup> Our ambassador suggested the possibility of the admission of diplomatic connections verbally. The representative of

<sup>2</sup> Adrian Pelt, deputy secretary-general of the United Nations became the officially mandated administrator of the organization in the Libyan case.

<sup>3</sup> Libya became a Federal Kingdom of three colonies. Its territory was 1 750 000 square kilometers. Its population was 1 150 000. His full name was Sajed Mohammed Idris el Madi es Senussi.

<sup>4</sup> The US built up its military base in Wheelus Field, 8 kilometers from Tripoli. Britain held military bases in Benghazi and in El-Adem. Libya got an estimated \$20 million rent for the bases.

<sup>5</sup> MOL KÜM KIS ORSZÁGOK LÍBIA 1945–1964 TÜK XIX-J-1-j packet 3, March 16, 1964. Rácz Károly's (ambassador in Baghdad) report on the situation of Libya to the State Department.

<sup>6</sup> It took up diplomatic connections with the Soviet Union among the socialist countries.

<sup>7</sup> We used to send and receive telegrams at the time of bigger national holidays from the end of the 1950s. MOL KÜM KIS ORSZÁGOK LÍBIA 1945–1964 ADMIN XIX-J-1-k packet 2, Telegrams.

<sup>8</sup> MOL KÜM KIS ORSZÁGOK LÍBIA 1945–1964 TÜK XIX-J-1-j packet 3, March 13-14, 1958. Washington – Libyan request towards Hungary.

Libya found it interesting and thought that it would be a bigger chance if the strengthening of they would strengthen the commercial connections as well.

A month later a meeting was held in Washington. That time the Hungarian ambassador visited the Libyan partner, asking for support for a speech at an upcoming ILO conference.<sup>9</sup> The meeting was held in good atmosphere and they talked not only about actual political questions but also about the political and economic situation of Hungary and Libya. Our ambassador raised the possibility of linking the commercial connections more tight. The Libyan ambassador replied in writing that his country is open to widen these connections with Hungary.

After 1958 our diplomatic position did not strengthen until 1964, but our economic position developed significantly.<sup>10</sup> Hungary exported goods to Libya to the value of 2,9 million Cft in 1960, 21,9 million Cft in 1962, 17 million Cft in 1963, 21,9 million Cft in 1964. The import was 0 Cft.<sup>11</sup> The Libyan export was thought to be important because the foreign partner paid in hard foreign currency (in dollar).

Besides, Hungarian commercial companies represented themselves at Tripolis International Fair from 1963. The Fair has been organized since 1960.

The next admission of connections was made on December 21, 1964, when a report was sent into the Department of State from Szipka József.<sup>12</sup> He was the Hungarian ambassador in Moscow. In his report, he informed the Hungarian authorities that Salem Ben Lamin, the newly accredited Libyan ambassador in Moscow visited him on 19<sup>th</sup> in the given month. [1] After reciting the international situation and economic possibilities of his country, he outlined which countries had Libya already kept as its connections.<sup>13</sup> He declared that the interest of Hungary in Libya would be welcomed.

László János evaluated Szipka's report at the State Department in an official note and he suggested the tightening of the connections.[2]

After evaluating the report, Rácz Pál, ambassador of Hungary in Cairo, who also covered the representation of Hungary in Sudan and Yemen, was informed via telegram. He was informed about the events happened in Moscow and was ordered to visit the Libyan

<sup>9</sup> MOL KÜM KIS ORSZÁGOK LÍBIA 1945–1964 TÜK XIX-J-1-j packet 3, April 28, 1958 Washington - meeting the Libyan ambassador.

<sup>10</sup> MOL KÜM LÍBIA 1966 TÜK XIX-J-1-j packet 80, April 22, 1966. Commercial connections with Libya.

<sup>11</sup> Cft means Currency Forint. This was a settling rate in our foreign trade.

<sup>12</sup> MOL KÜM LÍBIA 1966 TÜK XIX-J-1-j packet 80, 91-11 Forming diplomatic connections with Libya. It has to be noted here that all the documents of the negotiations about the admission of diplomatic connections could only be found at this document number until 1966. So this document number will be referred at quotations. / Moscow, December 21, 1964. Szipka József's (ambassador in Moscow) report to the State Department.

<sup>13</sup> The Soviet Union, Czech-Slovakia and Yugoslavia from the socialist countries took part in the meetings. Romania and Poland represented themselves by Cairo, though Bulgaria represented itself by Tunis. The German Democratic Republic ran a commercial branch-office in Tripoli.

ambassador seated in Cairo and initiate forming diplomatic connections between the two countries on an embassy level, verbally.<sup>14</sup>[3]

Mr. Mahmoud El-Khoga saw Rácz on January 27, 1965. The ambassador reacted positively to what was said and promised to submit certain directed proposals to the government. After the visit, our ambassador sent a report into the State Department in which he evaluated the shaping of the situation being positive. [4]

After that the Political Committee of The Central Committee of Hungarian Socialist Working Party (HSWP) discussed the previous steps and evaluated them. On February 15, 1965, the Committee agreed on the admission of the diplomatic connections of The People's Republic of Hungary and The Kingdom of Libya on an embassy level and on sending Rácz Pál to the Kingdom of Libya as an ambassador of Hungary.<sup>15</sup> Afterwards suggestions were made to the State Department to begin the negotiations.<sup>16</sup>[5]

The next months of 1965 spent without any important events for the two countries. The Libyan partner did not reply to the invitation from Cairo and did not get in touch with any embassies of Hungary.

It has to be mentioned here that the Ministry of Foreign Trade tried to build up a commercial branch-office in Tripoli in 1965, but in no vain.<sup>17</sup> Libya thought that if the sender country opened a branch-office and did nothing more, it would degrade the interstate connections of the receiver.

The State Department sent our Cairo ambassador to Libya in March, 1966 to inform about the cause of the slow procedure.<sup>18</sup>

Rácz stayed in Libya from 1<sup>st</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> March, 1966. He turned up at many parts of the country and negotiated with several leader politicians. During his ten-days travel our ambassador visited a part of the embassies in Tripoli, then he traveled to Beida to meet Ahmed al Bisti Secretary of State. Till he arrived to Beida, the Secretary of State had gone to Tripoli, so one of his deputies, Farag Ben Glaiel welcomed Rácz. Rácz reviewed the aims of his trip and asked about the diplomatic intentions of the Libya partner. The deputy seemed to be ready to change summaries, even right that time, but our ambassador informed him that he was not ready for that. Rácz promised the politician to hand in the certain files at the Libyan embassy in Cairo as soon as Libya strengthened its decision.

The ambassador gave account of his experiences in his travel report sent to the State Department.<sup>19</sup> The Hungarian partner made an other official visit to Libya during March,

<sup>14</sup> MOL KÜM LÍBIA 1966 TÜK XIX-J-1-j packet 80, 91-11 Forming diplomatic connections with Libya. January 21, 1965. An order to Rácz Pál from the State Department.

<sup>15</sup> Algerian ambassador, Mátyás László's name cropped up first during the meeting of the Political Committee. Finally, Rácz Pál was accepted.

<sup>16</sup> MOL KÜM LÍBIA 1966 TÜK XIX-J-1-j packet 80, 91-11 Forming diplomatic connections with Libya. February 15, 1965 A proposal to the Political Committee of the HSWP Central Committee.

<sup>17</sup> Here the events took two different strings. One with the aim of founding diplomatic connections. This was the intention of the State Department. The other one was the intention of the Ministry of Foreign Trade to strengthen the position of Hungarian companies in Libya. Both ministries wanted to reach their aims separately.

<sup>18</sup> MOL KÜM LÍBIA 1966 TÜK XIX-J-1-j packet 80, 91-11 Forming diplomatic connections with Libya. Between March 1 and 10, 1966. Rácz Pál traveled to Libya.

1966.<sup>20</sup> Orosz István, employee of the Ministry of Foreign Trade traveled to Libya to inform about the difficulties that arose in founding the commercial branch-office.

He failed to reach development during the negotiations with the State Department. The visit of Rácz Pál got forgotten and Libya could not report on the moving of the diplomatic connections. After arriving home, Orosz István gave account of the events happened abroad in his travel report.<sup>21</sup>

After the arrival of the reports in April, 1966 at the State Department, all the files in connection with Libya were examined in order to see everything clear. After the inquiry the rapporteurs came to the conclusion that the first more emphatic step had to be made by us, so a written decision had to be created in Hungary about the idea of admission diplomatic connections. In possession of these, Comrade Rácz has to make a written summary and handle it to the Libyan partner.

Being influenced by this, the resolution approved by the Central Committee of the Political Committee of HSWP in February 1965 was dug out at the State Department. Then, Secretary of State, Péter János submitted it to the government of the People's Republic of Hungary. the resolution became accepted on May 18, 1966 in the resolution numbered 3156/1966.<sup>22</sup>[6]

After accepting the government regulation Rácz Pál was informed by the State Department about the inboard in June 4, 1966. He was ordered to handle a written summary to the Libyan partner.<sup>23</sup>[7]

Our ambassador visited Mr. Mahmoud El-Khoga on June 19, 1966. He handed in the English version of the summary. The Libyan ambassador thanked the written summary and assured Rácz about a quick reply.<sup>24</sup>[8]

Arriving back to his residence our Ambassador sent a hopeful report to the State Department. [9]

However the Libyan partner did not sign its intention to strengthen the connections at any of our embassies until the summer of 1967.

At the end of 1966 something important happened that is in connection to the topic of this study.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>19</sup> MOL KÜM LÍBIA 1966 TÜK XIX-J-1-j packet 80, 91-11 Forming diplomatic connections with Libya. March 21, 1966. Rácz Pál's travel report on his Libyan visit.

<sup>20</sup> MOL KÜM LÍBIA 1966 TÜK XIX-J-1-j packet 80, 91-11 Forming diplomatic connections with Libya. Between March 17 and 25, 1966. Orosz István, officer at the Foreign Trade Ministry visited Libya.

<sup>21</sup> MOL KÜM LÍBIA 1966 TÜK XIX-J-1-j packet 80, 91-11 Forming diplomatic connections with Libya. April 9. 1966. Orosz István's travel report.

<sup>22</sup> Regulation numbered 3156/1966 of the Hungarian Revolutionary Workers' – Farmer Government.

<sup>23</sup> MOL KÜM LÍBIA 1966 TÜK XIX-J-1-j packet 80, 91-11 Forming diplomatic connections with Libya. June 4, 1966. report and order to Rácz Pál in Cairo from the State Department.

<sup>24</sup> MOL KÜM LÍBIA 1966 TÜK XIX-J-1-j packet 80, 91-11 Forming diplomatic connections with Libya. June 24, 1966. report from Rácz Pál, Cairo ambassador to the State Department.

<sup>25</sup> MOL KÜM LÍBIA 1966 TÜK XIX-J-1-j packet 80, 91-11 Forming diplomatic connections with Libya. December 20, 1966. report of the Consul Department to the Secretary of State

In December 1966, Mr. Abdurazzag Misallati, Libyan ambassador accredited to Belgrade, notified the Hungarian State Department that he is intended to visit our country.

The aim of his visit was to visit a compatriot of him who was spending his 1 year 2 months of jail sentence.<sup>26</sup>

The State Department asked for information from the National Commander of Penal Authorities, and then ensured a date for the ambassador's visit. However, Mr. Misallati was asked to go to the State Department first, for being informed about the case. The ambassador signed in at 2 p.m. on December 19 at the Consular Department. He was informed about the state of the Libyan citizen and was told to visit the prisoner next day. The officers of the Consular Department gave details about the connections of the two countries and outlined the all-time Hungarian steps towards Libya. The ambassador did not know anything about that, but also promised to urge the case, if it is possible. Afterwards, he left the building of the State Department and resigned at Hotel Gellért.

The afternoon after the meeting, a phone call was made to the State Department from the National Commander of Penal Authorities. The officer of the Consular Department was informed that the papers were mixed because of an administrative mistake.

According to the new information the prisoner was said to handle a plea of mercy to the Presidential Committee. The plea was evaluated positively. The Libyan citizen was not in jail, but was staying at Budapest Sport Hotel with a penalty of home leaving. Afterwards, the leaders of the Consular Department hold a meeting and agreed on inviting the ambassador again and told him about the events, as they would have happened thanks to his arrival.

*The ambassador arrived in the evening. He was informed that 'the prisoner handed in a plea of mercy to the Presidential Committee. The plea was evaluated positively. The reason for that are the positive developing connections between the two countries and the interest of Libya in Hungary. Furthermore, the family situation of the prisoner helped the events. So the State Department could help the case in a good way. Hema Mohamed Abdalava will be informed about the decision of the Presidential Committee tomorrow.'* Afterwards, the ambassador said that his government must appreciate this gesture.<sup>27</sup>

There were no negotiations made between Hungary and Libya in the first months of 1967. The foreign affairs documents about the next few months are quite incomplete. It is for sure that Rácz Pál was planning to travel to Libya in April. There are no sources whether he traveled there or not.

After that, the events started to accelerate. At the beginning of June, 1967, the Libyan partner notified us in a summary that they were ready for the admission of diplomatic connections with the People's Republic of Hungary from the 1<sup>st</sup> of July, 1967.

After that, the Hungarian Secretary of State handed in the government regulation numbered 3156/1966 to the Presidential Committee of the People's Republic of Hungary on June 27, 1967. The Presidential Committee ratified the regulation and numbered it

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<sup>26</sup>The Libyan citizen, driving drunken hit a bicyclist in Eger downtown, who died of his injuries.

<sup>27</sup>After the case the Secretary of State wrote a letter to the Attorney General warning him to prevent an other case like that because it was extremely difficult to put everything to the interest of the service of foreign affairs.



177/1967. Then Losonczy Pál, president of the Presidential Committee of the People's Republic of Hungary signed the document.<sup>28</sup>[10]

On August 4, our embassy informed the Libyan partner that the supreme decision about starting the official connections was born

On September 18, 1967, Libya made Hungary know through its Belgrade embassy that its government appreciated Rácz Pál's nomination and were ready to welcome him.<sup>29</sup>[11]

In October 1967, Rácz was supplied with the letter of credence, signet and signals needed for the accreditation, and was ordered to make the introductory visit to Libya by the State Department.<sup>30</sup>[12]

Our new Libya ambassador left from Cairo to Tripoli on November 10, 1967, for handing over his letter of credence. This was made on November 30. [13]

After handing over the letter of credence Rácz Pál stayed one more week in Libya. Afterwards, our ambassador arrived back to his official seat in Cairo from where he reported his experiences and the Libyan events.<sup>31</sup>[14]

### *Events after 1967*

After the admission of the diplomatic connections a quality development could be noticed in the relationship of the two countries. Besides the strengthening of political and economic connections scientific, technical and cultural cooperation started between Hungary and Libya. In result, Hungary made several agreements with the North-African country.

Rácz Pál represented our country in Libya until 1968. Then he made an official farewell visit to Tripoli in July.<sup>32</sup> Szarka Károly followed him as ambassador. He handed the letter of credence to King Idris I., at the beginning of February 1969.<sup>33</sup>

The numerous official affairs requires buying residence, and employing a constant staff in Tripoli. The People's Republic of Hungary got an opportunity for that in 1971.

<sup>28</sup> MOL KÜM LÍBIA 1967 TÜK XIX-J-1-j packet 64, 91-116 Number 177/1967 resolution of the Presidential Council of the Hungarian People's Republic. The information was published in Hungarian press (*Népszabadság*, *Népszava*) on July 2, 1967

<sup>29</sup> MOL KÜM LÍBIA 1967 TÜK XIX-J-1-j packet 64, 91-116 September 19, 1967 ambassador Marjai József's report from Belgrade to the State Department.

<sup>30</sup> A separate resolution was born about Rácz Pál and the surrender of the needed documents. Unfortunately no referring source material can be found.

<sup>31</sup> MOL KÜM LÍBIA 1967 TÜK XIX-J-1-j packet 64, 91-116 December 21, 1967. Rácz Pál's report to the State Department about the handing of his letter of credence.

<sup>32</sup> MOL KÜM LÍBIA 1968 TÜK XIX-J-1-j packet 63, 91-1 Between July 8 and 19, 1968. Rácz Pál makes a farewell visit to Libya.

<sup>33</sup> MOL KÜM LÍBIA 1969 TÜK XIX-J-1-j packet 63, 91-1 March 14, 1969. Szarka Károly's Libyan travel report from Cairo to the State Department.

*Conclusion*

To sum up, it can be said that through the ten years from the first official meeting to the ratification of connections to a formal level, our diplomats did quite a hard work, which made a strong base for the further creation of a deep connection. The good connection can be felt even these days, because the Republic of Hungary still represents itself on an embassy level having its seat in Tripoli, Libya.

## *Attachments*

### **1. Ambassador Szipka József's report from Moscow**

The Embassy of the People's Republic of Hungary

301/Szt/1964

Top secret!

Moscow, December 21, 1964

Subject: Introductory visit of the Libyan Ambassador

Made in 3 copies

2 copies for the center

1 copy for the embassy

On the 19<sup>th</sup> of the given month Libyan Ambassador Salem Ben Lamin visited me. During the longer conversation that developed he was interested whether I was aware of the participation of Hungary at the International Fair in Tripoli.

He said that the socialist countries like The Soviet Union, Poland, Romania and Yugoslavia would participate in that. The Tripoli International Fair has quite a short history. It is only four years old. According to his opinion it could be interesting for Eastern-European countries. He told me that they import mainly building materials /cement, steel...etc/ and they feel that their connections with European countries are able to be improved on this base. He emphasized that their economic connections with Yugoslavia are quite intensive. For example about 200 Yugoslavian people work in Libya today.

He mentioned Poland and Romania would accredit their Cairo ambassadors to Libya and he raised his personal point of view that Libya would welcome if Hungary showed interest towards connections with country.

The ambassador talked about the foreign affairs of his country in details. He emphasized that its base is formed by peaceful living next to each other and non-commitment. He emphasized that his country is standing on the ground of Arab and African unity. In connection with this, he mentioned that his country gave a huge help to the liberation struggle of Algeria and Tunisia. He talked endlessly about that according to his view, small states that would suffer from a possible atom-war the most have to fight in the front lines for living next to each other peacefully and for the total ban of atom weapons.

He said that on his point of view, those who attack Libya for having foreign bases in its territory are unfair. Historically what happened is that British and American forces freed the country from rule of the Italian fascism and having the lack of all material tools, in the 1<sup>st</sup> years of the country there was urgent need for all outer financial support. In this

situation the question to withdraw the foreign forces from the territory of the country was certainly impossible. Despite, he emphasized that in his opinion, the elimination of the Libyan foreign bases in Libya would be current.

Szipka József  
Ambassador

## **2. State Department aide-mémoire and suggestion to the admission of the diplomatic connections**

District IX. Regional Department  
László János attaché

Top Secret!

Subject: Admission of the Hungarian-Libyan diplomatic connections

.....description on Libya

Libya has been improving its official connections with socialist countries as well. According to the accessible records from the socialist countries, The Soviet Union, Czech-Slovakia and Yugoslavia have embassies in Tripoli, Poland and Romania accredit their Cairo ambassadors to the Libyan capital.

During the consultation held between the representatives of the Czech-Slovak and Hungarian State Departments recently, the Czech-Slovak comrades reported that they regard the building of an embassy in Tripoli an impetuous step. Hence they decided to accredit their Tunisian ambassador to Tripoli after remanding their ambassador. This was found to be burdensome from the Libyan party and it was announced in a memorandum that the accreditation of a certain ambassador is required who has a residence in Libya too.

The admission of the diplomatic connections between the People's Republic of Hungary and the Kingdom of Libya was not initiated by neither of the parties officially yet.

Moscow ambassador Comrade Szipka József reported that Salem Ben Lamin who made an introductory visit to him 'mentioned that Poland and Romania will accredit their Cairo ambassador to Libya and suggested on his personal point of view that it would be certainly welcomed from the Libyan party if Hungary showed interest towards the connections with Libya as well.'

.....description on Libya

### Suggestion:

1. Since the admission of the official connections with the Kingdom of Libya is actual and it would also be actual for the improve of our commerce. Reacting to the Moscow Libyan ambassador's personal initiation we should issue the admission of the diplomatic connections with the Libyan Kingdom on an embassy level.

2. After the admission of the diplomatic connections we should accredit Comrade Mátyás László, Algerian ambassador of ours to Tripoli leaving his present commission untouched at the same time.
3. We should order our Moscow or Cairo ambassador to initiate negotiations at the Embassy of the Kingdom of Libya for the admission of the diplomatic connections.

Budapest, January 7, 1965

**3. The order of the State Department to Rácz Pál to initiate the admission of the diplomatic connections verbally**

Top Secret!  
00345/1965.

**Admission of the Hungarian-Libyan diplomatic connections**

*To the Embassy*

*Cairo*

During his visit to Comrade Szipka, the Moscow ambassador of the Libyan Kingdom expressed his personal opinion that Libya would welcome if Hungary showed interest towards connections with Libya.

As for our adjudgement, the admission of the official connections with the Kingdom of Libya is actual and it would also be actual for the improve of our commerce. Since the management of the State Department decided that we initiated steps for the admission of the diplomatic connections with the Libyan Kingdom on an embassy level.

According to the mentioned above we request Comrade Ambassador to visit the Libyan ambassador in Cairo and initiate verbally the forming of diplomatic connections between the two countries on an embassy level. Of course we cannot build an independent embassy in Tripoli because of financial problems.

We also inform Comrade Ambassador that our authorities has not made any regulations about the admission of the connections. We would make the certain steps for that after the Libyan government has also expressed its pleasure for the admission of the connections. So the change of memoranda and the agreement concerning publication will be made after the birth of the regulation.

We are sending our Moscow ambassador's report and the aide-mémoire on the subject above of the Department to inform Comrade Ambassador.

We request Comrade Ambassador to inform the Center about Your steps in the Subject above by telegram as well continuously.

Budapest, January 21, 1965  
Tóth Elek

Head of Department

**4. Rácz Pál's report on the visit to the Libyan ambassador****Embassy of the People's Republic of Hungary**

28/1/Sz.T./1965

**Made in 5 copies****Center: 4 copies****Embassy: 1 copy****Top secret!**

Cairo, January 28, 1965

**Subject: Admission of the Hungarian-Libyan  
diplomatic connections****Ref. Number: 11345/1965**

With reference to the regulation numbered above I am reporting the followings:

On January 27 I visited Mr. Mahmoud El-Khoga, the Cairo Ambassador of The Kingdom of Libya.

According to the central rule I initiated the forming of the diplomatic connections between the two countries on an embassy level. The ambassador reacted to our initiative on a very positive way. He stated that personally he agrees on the forming of the diplomatic connections and would submit a certain resolution to the government. He hopes to inform us about a positive reply soon.

During the conversation I informed the Ambassador about the main foreign affairs aims of the People's Republic of Hungary. Within the scope of this, I said how the relation of our country and Arab nations developed and tightened in the previous years. I let him know that Hungary participated at the International Fair in Tripoli in the last two years and we were taking part that year as well. I referred to the possibility of the forming and improving of economic and technical connections.

The Ambassador, who has only been in diplomatic service for ten months and has been working at an unidentified economic field, showed interest to the admission of our connections. He announced that many socialist countries have embassies in Libya. From ambassadors seating in Cairo, the Polish, the Pakistani and the Indian ones are accredited into Libya.

He announced that the connections between the United Arab Emirates and Libya widened greatly and misunderstanding cleared in the previous one year. It appeared at the latest leaders' meeting held in Cairo that the Arab countries were uniform in the main questions and nothing could estrange them.

Finally, the Ambassador suggested that I should visit the International Fair in Tripoli that would be held in the near future.

Rácz Pál  
Ambassador

**5. Regulation of the Political Committee of the Central Committee of HSWP about the admission of the Hungarian-Libyan diplomatic connections**

**HSWP Foreign Affairs Department**  
45/PJ/1965  
00345

**Urgent!**  
**Top secret!**

Proposal  
to the Political Committee of HSWP Central Committee

The Political Committee, in its December 1, 1964 resolution about the connections between the People's Republic of Hungary and the Arab countries, declares that 'we should be aimed to widen the economic connections and afterwards initiate the admission of the diplomatic connections...' with Libya.

Our commercial connections with Libya are already of great volume but are showing a constant improvement. So our export to Libya was 17 million Cft in 1963 and 21,9 million Cft in 1964. On the other side, we did not transact any import. Some of our companies participated at the International Fair in Tripoli in the last two years and we are participating at the Fair of 1965 as well.

The improvement of the economic connections forms a base for forming diplomatic connections with The Kingdom of Libya. This seems to be expedient for improving our connections so we suggest the State Department start negotiations with the Libyan government about the admission of the diplomatic connections between the two countries. Furthermore, we suggest that in the case of the admission of the diplomatic connections we accredit Comrade Ambassador Rácz Pál to Libya.

From the socialist countries, The Soviet Union, Czech-Slovakia and Yugoslavia has an embassy in Tripoli. Poland and Romania accredited their Cairo ambassador into Libya.

**Plan of regulation**

The Political Committee of the Central Committee of HSWP agrees on the admission of diplomatic connections between the People's Republic of Hungary and the Libyan Kingdom on an embassy level and on Cairo Ambassador Rácz Pál's accreditation to Libya.

Budapest, February 15, 1965

*Péter János   Puja Ferenc*

**6. Government regulation about the admission of the Hungarian-Libyan diplomatic connections**

**Hungarian Revolutionary Worker – Farmer Government**  
copy number 5

**Made in 44 copies**

To: members of parliament,

Comrade Kiss Károly,

Comrade Puja Frigyes

Resolution numbered 3156/1966 of the

Hungarian Revolutionary Worker-Farmer Government

about the admission of the Hungarian-Libyan diplomatic connections and Ambassador Rácz Pál's accreditation

**The Hungarian Revolutionary Worker-Farmer Government**

1. accepts the forming of diplomatic connections between the People's Republic of Hungary and the United Kingdom of Libya on an embassy level and Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary Rácz Pál's accreditation to Libya leaving his commission of leading the Cairo Embassy and his accreditation to Yemen and Sudan untouched.
2. assigns the Secretary Of State to propose in both cases to the Presidential Committee of the People's Republic.

Budapest, May 18, 1966

*Fock Jenő*

Deputy-chairman of the Hungarian Revolutionary Worker-Farmer Government

**7. Order of the State Department to Rácz Pál to hand over a written summary to the Libyan partner**

**Top Secret!**

**The admission of the Hungarian-Libyan  
diplomatic connections**

112812/2

68/sz.t. and 002256/sz.t. own

Embassy  
Cairo

With reference to Comrade Ambassador's report numbered above we announce that the Hungarian Revolutionary Worker-Farmer Government, with its resolution number 3156/1966 agrees on the forming of diplomatic connection between the People's Republic



of Hungary and the United Kingdom of Libya on an embassy level. Moreover, it agrees on Rácz Pál's accreditation to Libya leaving his earlier delegations untouched.

Since we experienced during the investigation aiming the admission of the diplomatic connections between the two countries that the Libyans were expecting the initiative in a written form. Agreeing on Comrade Ambassador's suggestion we request You to hand over a memorandum to the Cairo ambassador of Libya and please announce in it that led by the building of fruitful connections between the two countries, the Hungarian government is ready to form diplomatic connections with the United Kingdom of Libya on an embassy level. In the case of his interest You can state in words that we are not planning to establish any embassies and are intended to accredit Comrade Ambassador to Libya.

We request Comrade Ambassador hand over the memorandum. Furthermore, please report on the reaction of the Libyan partner.

Budapest, June 4, 1966.

Tóth Elek

*Head of Department*

#### **8. Rácz Pál's written summary to the Libyan party about the admission of the Hungarian-Libyan diplomatic connections**

68/2/1966

The Embassy of the Hungarian People's Republic in Cairo presents its compliments to the Embassy of the Kingdom of Libya and upon the instruction of its Government has honor to communicate the following.

Lead by the principle of peaceful coexistence and friendly relations among nations and being desirous to develop further the fruitful cooperation between the two countries the Government of the Hungarian People's Republic expresses its willingness to establish diplomatic relations and to exchange diplomatic representatives with the Kingdom of Libya on the level of Ambassadors.

The Embassy of the Kingdom of Libya is kindly requested to forward the above communication to its Government and to inform this Embassy of their position.

Waiting for the communication of the answer the Embassy of the Hungarian People's Republic avails itself of this opportunity to renew to the Embassy of the Kingdom of Libya the assurances of its highest consideration.

Cairo, June 19, 1966

**9. Rácz Pál's report to the State Department on having handed over the written form of the English memorandum****Embassy of the People's Republic of Hungary**

68/2/Sz.T./1966

Made in 5 copies

Center: 4 copies

Embassy: 1 copy

**Top secret!**

Cairo, June 24, 1966

Subject: Admission of the Hungarian-Libyan  
diplomatic connections

Ref. number: 002812/1

Attachment: 1 item

After that Cairo Ambassador of Libya Mahmoud El-Khoga declared that our nation could expect a favorable welcome about the case of the admission of diplomatic connections, I handed over the attached memorandum to the Ambassador on June 19.

The Ambassador stated that our formal and written initiative greatly supported the case to be submitted by the government and was sure that their reply would be favorable. The Ambassador also said that he would travel for vacation to Libya in a few days' time. He will take the memorandum with him and make further steps personally towards a positive reply. According to his publication we can expect him to handle the greeting reply in the first half of September after arriving back from his vacation.

He raised whether I would be accredited to Libya as well in the case of the admission of diplomatic connections. I announced him that this is the idea since we are not planning to build up an embassy in Libya.

Afterwards, I conversed with the Ambassador about the Arab conference. The Ambassador emphasized that Libya is a neutral, non-committed country and its neutrality prevails in the Arab world as well. They keep themselves away from the evolving rows in the Arab World.

Rácz Pál

*Ambassador***10. Regulation of the Presidential Committee****Regulation number 177/1967 of the Presidential Committee of the People's Republic**

The Presidential Committee of The People's Republic of Hungary decides on the admission of the diplomatic connections between The People's Republic of Hungary and The United Kingdom of Libya.

Budapest, June 27, 1967

**Losonczi Pál**

President of the

Presidential Committee of the People's Republic of Hungary

**Cseterki László**

Secretary

**11. Belgrade Ambassador's report on the acceptance of Rácz Pál's accreditation by the Libyan partner**

**Embassy of the People's Republic of Hungary**

**Top Secret!**

202/1/sz.t./1967

Belgrade, September 19, 1967

Made in 3 copies

Subject: Consent to Comrade Rácz Pál's nomination as Libyan ambassador

2 copies to the center

1 copy to the embassy

As I have previously reported by telegram, the Libyan embassy on Belgrade announced in its attached petitioned memorandum in original – with reference to the Aide memoire of August 4, 1967 – that the government of the Kingdom of Libya agreed on Rácz Pál's nomination as Ambassador Extraordinary Plenipotentiary into the Kingdom of Libya.

Marjai József  
*Ambassador*

The memorandum of the Libyan party is attached:

Embassy  
of the Kingdom of Libya  
Belgrade

No 268

The Embassy of the Kingdom of Libya in Belgrade presents its compliments to the Embassy of the People's Republic of Hungary and, with reference to the Embassy Aide-memoire of August 4, 1967, has the honor to inform them that the Government of the Kingdom of Libya has agreed on the nomination of His Excellency Rácz Pál as Ambassador Extraordinary Plenipotentiary of the People's Republic of Hungary to the Kingdom of Libya.

The Embassy of the Kingdom of Libya in Belgrade avails itself of this opportunity to renew the Embassy of the People's Republic of Hungary the assurances of its highest consideration.

Belgrade, September 18, 1967

To: The People's Republic of Hungary  
Belgrade

**12. Directives to Rácz Pál in connection with his nomination from the State Department**

Top secret!  
00912/4

The handing over of Rácz Pál's letter of credence  
3 copies

Embassy  
Cairo

On the occasion of the upcoming handing over of Comrade Ambassador's letter of credence we are sending his letter of credence as attachment, the plan of speech given at the handing over both in English and Hungarian. Furthermore, the information material about the Libyan-Hungarian connections.

As we have earlier mentioned by telegram, the handing over of the letter of credence should be timed in a way that the November 20 opening exhibition of TRANSELEKTRO in Tripoli could join originally.

It is for sure that the two Hungary-related even following each other and would take favorable effect drawing the attention to the improving of Hungarian-Libyan connections.

Visits in relation to the handing over of the letter of credence offer a good possibility for us to inform the Libyan leaders on a certain extent about our country and foreign affairs introducing the basics of our foreign affairs aims especially in consideration of the maintained relations with Arab nations. It might be referred here to that besides having successfully improving traditional relations with several Arab countries we are trying to form good relations with all Arab countries now. Moreover, we consider the tightening of our greatly improving connections with Libya essential. We believe that beyond the already formed and deepening political connections it would be of an advantage for both of the two countries to form and deepen the cooperation on a multi-level. Internally, we consider the successful improving of our economic and commercial connections of extreme importance.

The carrying out of our aims directed to cooperation would be helped to a great extent if the ambassador were accredited soon in Budapest. It should be also referred to that having the opportunity we would gladly welcome a Libyan foreign representation in our country indeed.

It would be essential and have positive effect if Comrade Ambassador outlined in details the opinion of our government about the crisis in the Middle-East referring to those statements and practical activities with which we gave support to the elimination of the consequences of the Israel aggression, to the anti-imperialism fight of the Arab people.

We request Comrade Ambassador to kindly inform us about his experiences, impressions during his Libyan travel and about the connections of the two countries and his suggestions and further problems.

**Budapest, October 26, 1967**

Tóth Elek  
Head of Department

### **13. Rácz Pál's speech to King Idris I. and telegrams home**

Your Majesty,

I consider it a great honor to be able to hand Your Majesty my credentials by which the Presidential Council of the Hungarian People's Republic has accredited me as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary to Your Majesty.

This solemn occasion acquires special significance in view of the fact that this is the first time a diplomatic representative is accredited between the Hungarian People's Republic and the Kingdom of Libya, which is a manifestation of the successful development of relations existing between our countries.

May I, on handing my credentials, convey to Your Majesty the sincere best wishes of the Presidential Council of the Hungarian People's Republic for the prosperity of the Kingdom of Libya and the personal happiness of Your Majesty. I wish the traditional bond of friendship to strengthen further between the Hungarian people and the Arab peoples, including the people of the Kingdom of Libya with an ancient culture and a heroic past. The Presidential Council and the Government of the Hungarian People's Republic attach a great importance to the relations between our countries and have the intention of developing them further particularly in the field of our economic and cultural cooperation.

As your myself, the profound sympathy I felt toward the Libyan people adds to the pleasure I have in accepting this honoring mission of dedicating my activity to promoting and supporting the development of stronger and closer relations between our countries. I will spare no efforts to perform my mission for the mutual benefit of our peoples, and I hope that this endeavor I can count upon the trust of Your Majesty and the support of the Government of the Kingdom Libya.

#### ***Rácz Pál's telegram from Libya. December 1, 1967***

I handed the letter of credence to King Idris I. in Tripoli on 30<sup>th</sup> of given month. In his reply speech he greeted our leaders and thanked the Arab people for their support. He emphasized the importance of improvement of our economic connections. He hopes that our country can participate in the realization of the improvement plan of Libya by forming diplomatic connections. After the handing over the King welcomed me on a private audience. Secretary of State Bisthi, Royal Advisor Muntasser were also present. I introduced Commercial Counselor Jenőfi István to the King.

**14. Rácz Pál's travel report on the occasion of the hand-over of his letter of credence****Embassy of the People's Republic of Hungary**

4/2/Sz.T./1967

**Made in 5 copies****Center: 4 copies****Embassy: 1 copy****Top secret!**

Cairo, December 21, 1967

**Subject: the handing over of the letter of  
credence in Libya****Attachment: 2 items**

I left for Libya from Cairo on November 1 to hand over the letter of credence. That experiment of mine, particularly to note down the time for the handing over of the letter of credence in advance through Comrade Jenőfi and the Libyan embassy did not succeed. It was announced from the Libyan side that they could only set the date at the scene, after my arrival. I expected to get the letter of credence before the beginning of ramadan. Since the Libyan sorrowful circumstances this could only happen on November 30. Though because of this event, my stay in Libya became longer as I had earlier expected. Actually I waited less than other ambassadors (Swiss, Greek, Yugoslavian, Italian) who handed over their letters of credence the same time as me. The Swiss ambassador waited for the longest (three months) for handing his letter of credence.

The handing over of the letter of credence is extremely circumstantial in Libya with regards to its geographical character, the distance and the difficulties of traffic. The official capital of the country is Beida where the Secretary of State normally receives the copies of the letters of credence. But it happens that the Secretary of State spends a longer time in Tripoli, 1300 kilometers from Beida. In this case we have to travel there. The King usually stays in Tobruk, which is situated at the other side of the country and he receives the letters of credence there. The introductory meetings take place in Tripoli, where the ministers and the leaders of the country can be reached the most and where the diplomatic missions seat. I had luck because King Idris traveled to Tripoli at the end of November to receive the Turkish president who was preparing for an official visit (actually the Turkish president cancelled his visit because of events in Cyprus). On the other hand the King did not return to Tibruk so he could receive the ambassadors.

After my arrival to Beida Shaloff Foreign Affairs Secretary received and invited me for lunch. He advised me to move to Tobruk because the King would stay there for a week. It happened this way and I managed to hand over the copy of the letter of credence to the Secretary of State in a short period of time.

The new session of parliament opened on November 20 in Beida. This was regarded as a significant event in the country because the head of the new government, President Bakhus introduced the program of his government. The leaders of the diplomatic missions were invited to the opening of the session. Despite that I had not handed over the letter of credence I was also invited. I traveled to Beida from Tripoli, with many other ambassadors waiting for handing over their letters of credence, where I took part in the opening of

the parliamentary session. Here I had the opportunity to meet and have a talk with several local leaders.

As I have already reported, Secretary of State Bisthi and Royal Advisor Muntaser were present at the handing over of the letter of credence. The King replied very shortly to my speech that was translated into Arab by the Secretary of State (He must have learned the speech by heart because he said it in fluent Arabic without using any notes.)

After the handing over of the letter of credence I could stay for not exactly a week so I could only meet few Libyan leaders. Ramadan also hindered me in making more visits.

I was welcomed by the President, the Information Minister. I visited the Governor of Tripolitaina, Salem El-Maned, the major of Tripoli, Mahmoud Alhodzsa (former ambassador in Cairo ), the President of the Tripoli International Fair, Ahmed M. Lahsairy and at the President of the Electrical Committee Ali Anis (latter has the rank of president and is important for us in an economic sense).

After the handing over of the letter of credence the Czech-Slovak ambassador gave a dinner in my honor where leaders of all friendly missions took part. As for myself I invited the friendly diplomats at the exhibition hall of Transelektro Commercial Company.

...foreign affairs and internal situation of Libya, experience

...suggestion for the future

Rácz Pál  
*Ambassador*





## *Alleanza Nazionale: tra postfascismo e crisi identitaria*

Simone MERIGGI  
Università di Szeged

La destra politica italiana è rappresentata da diversi partiti e movimenti, tralasciando quelli collocati nell'area più estrema, e con una limitata rappresentanza parlamentare, l'attenzione non può che concentrarsi su *Alleanza Nazionale*. Quest'ultimo è un soggetto politico che ha da poco compiuto i suoi primi dieci anni e che è nato dalle radici di un partito storico, il *Movimento Sociale Italiano*, che si è ispirato per oltre quarant'anni all'ideologia fascista. Questo movimento di nostalgici è nato ufficialmente il 26 dicembre del 1946 e, a seguito della fondazione, viene emanato un comunicato: "I rappresentanti del Fronte del lavoro, della Unione sindacale ferrovieri italiani, del Movimento italiano di unità sociale, del movimento de La Rivolta sociale, del Gruppo reduci indipendenti, constatata la perfetta identità di vedute e finalità politiche sociali, hanno costituito il Movimento sociale italiano"<sup>1</sup>.

La decisione di chiamare la nuova organizzazione movimento anziché partito, sembra sia da far risalire ad uno dei più importanti *leader* della destra neofascista, Pino Romualdi, il quale disse che si trattava di un "(...) movimento e non partito in quanto la nuova organizzazione aveva una ragione dinamica, dovendosi muovere verso la ricostruzione del partito fascista repubblicano (...) "<sup>2</sup>. Il *Movimento Sociale Italiano* ha rappresentato per tutta la sua vita un partito di nostalgici e, spesso, ha attraversato momenti di crisi che ne hanno messo in dubbio l'esistenza stessa, come durante i drammatici fatti di Genova del 1960<sup>3</sup>.

In altre occasioni, i dirigenti missini hanno cercato nuove strategie per uscire dallo stato di isolamento in cui, per diverse ragioni, si trovava. Un tentativo, quello che ha creato le maggiori speranze, è stato la nascita della *Nuova Destra*.

Dalla definizione si può capire che ricalca la *Nouvelle Droite* francese animata dal giornalista Alain De Benoist, e già all'inizio degli anni Ottanta, questa associazione, considera il neofascismo un'esperienza esaurita. I principali animatori sono "(...) Marco Tarchi, Stenio Solinas, Gennaro Malgieri, Mario Bernardi Guardi e Franco Cardini (...) "<sup>4</sup> ed il loro obiettivo era quello di rafforzare il piano culturale della destra, perché "(...)

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<sup>1</sup> (Anonimo), *È nato il Msi*, in "Rivolta ideale", del 26 Dicembre 1946.

<sup>2</sup> Relazione del questore di Roma, Saverio Polito, alla magistratura, 27 agosto 1950, in ACS, MI, PS 1950, I sezione, b.29.

<sup>3</sup> Sulle vicende legate ai fatti di Genova e al governo Tambroni: Cfr., Giulio Andreotti, *Governare con la crisi*, Milano, Rizzoli, 1991, pp.105-110. ed anche: Cfr., G.Mammarella, *L'Italia dopo il fascismo. 1943-1973*, Bologna, Il Mulino, 1974, pp.322-326.

<sup>4</sup> Nicola Rao, *Neofascisti!*, Roma, Settimo Sigillo, 1999, p.189.

senza l'egemonia o comunque senza un radicamento sul piano culturale, non si può conquistare, né tantomeno mantenere un'egemonia politica"<sup>5</sup>.

In realtà, i vertici missini non accettano volentieri questo tentativo di andare oltre l'ideologia fascista, rigettando tutte le tentazioni autoritarie, impauriti, forse, di perdere i voti dei nostalgici che assicurano loro un seggio in parlamento, e l'esperienza della *Nuova Destra* si conclude e Marco Tarchi viene costretto a lasciare il partito.

Il *Movimento Sociale Italiano* continua quindi nella difesa della sua identità, e bisognerà attendere gli anni Novanta per assistere ad un vero e proprio cambiamento, anche se a prescindere dalle vere intenzioni missine.

Ciò che porta alla ribalta il *Movimento sociale italiano* è rappresentato dalle conseguenze delle inchieste della magistratura sulle sovvenzioni ai partiti e sulla corruzione, che era diventata prassi, all'interno del sistema politico italiano.

Il periodo delle inchieste e delle sue conseguenze è ormai noto con i nomi di Mani Pulite o Tangentopoli. Il primo arresto avviene il 17 febbraio 1992, si trattava di un ex consigliere provinciale del Partito socialista italiano, Mario Chiesa, presidente di un ente pubblico per l'assistenza agli anziani<sup>6</sup>. Era l'inizio, o meglio il primo risultato, dell'inchiesta condotta dalla Procura di Milano sulla corruzione degli ambienti politici e imprenditoriali: "(...) le indagini coinvolsero diversi esponenti della Democrazia cristiana, del Partito socialista italiano, e in particolare Bettino Craxi, ma misero in luce un sistema di corruzione diffuso e generalizzato a tutti i livelli."<sup>7</sup>

Le Indagini portano, in un tempo brevissimo, al crollo del sistema italiano, quasi tutti i partiti risultano più o meno coinvolti nel sistema della corruzione, i *potenti* che avevano governato l'Italia per tanto tempo ricevono più di un avviso di garanzia, e sono costretti a dimettersi e poi, spesso, sottoposti alla gogna del processo in diretta televisiva, come quello, clamoroso, contro Arnaldo Forlani, esponente di primissimo piano della Democrazia cristiana. Craxi invece, per evitare l'arresto, decide di passare il resto della sua vita in Tunisia<sup>8</sup>.

Il *Movimento Sociale Italiano* è probabilmente l'unico partito non toccato dal sistema corruttizio, la sua esclusione dal sistema, gli hanno permesso di mantenersi 'pulito' almeno in questo settore. In quello stesso periodo era stata varata una nuova legge che aboliva il sistema proporzionale puro e lo sostituiva con il sistema maggioritario, vero e proprio spettro per la dirigenza missina, inoltre era stata approvata la legge che permetteva di eleggere direttamente i sindaci in città con più di 15000 abitanti.

I missini avevano sempre avversato il sistema maggioritario, convinti che avrebbe messo a repentaglio la vita stessa del *Movimento Sociale Italiano*, ma i profondi

<sup>5</sup> N. Rao, *Neofascisti!*, cit., p.191.

<sup>6</sup> Cfr., (Anonimo), *Noto manager pubblico milanese arrestato con l'accusa di concussione*, in "Il Giornale", 18 febbraio 1992.

<sup>7</sup> Giovanni De Luna, *Una lettura di Mani Pulite*, in "La Rivista del Manifesto", n.25 febbraio 2002, p. 4.

<sup>8</sup> Per uno studio su quel periodo: Cfr., G. Barbacetto - P. Gomez - M. Travaglio, *Mani pulite, la vera storia*, Roma, Editori Riuniti, 2002.

cambiamenti del panorama politico, ed il nuovo sistema elettorale, premiarono i neofascisti.

Già dalle elezioni parziali del 1992 il *Movimento Sociale Italiano* avanza di un punto percentuale<sup>9</sup>, ugualmente nelle amministrative del 1993<sup>10</sup> e ottiene l'elezione di 19 sindaci, soprattutto in Puglia, in Abruzzo e nel Lazio. Ma il fatto più eclatante avviene con le elezioni per il sindaco di Roma e di Napoli; nella capitale Gianfranco Fini arriva al ballottaggio contro Francesco Rutelli, e nel capoluogo campano, la nipote del duce, Alessandra Mussolini sfida al ballottaggio Bassolino.

Nel contesto romano, "(...) di enorme impatto, poi, è la dichiarazione di Silvio Berlusconi a favore di Fini nel suo confronto con il verde Francesco Rutelli: per la prima volta un imprenditore di prima grandezza prende pubblicamente posizione a favore di un rappresentante della estrema destra infrangendo un tabù fino ad allora inviolato."<sup>11</sup> I due rappresentanti missini mancano il successo, ma le differenze sono minime, Fini viene distanziato da Rutelli di soli tre punti percentuale.

Il *Movimento sociale Italiano* non è preparato per gestire questa nuova fase, deve controllare un consenso crescente ed oltre ogni più ottimistica previsione e la classe dirigente missina non è politicamente pronta per affrontare un dibattito che coinvolga un elettorato che superi il 3-4% al quale era abituato. Come prima mossa, la segreteria missina pensa di far confluire il *Movimento Sociale Italiano* in una nuova formazione politica con a capo l'ex presidente della Repubblica Francesco Cossiga, ma poi opta per una proposta lanciata dal politologo Domenico Fisichella<sup>12</sup> che progettava la nascita di uno schieramento più ampio denominato *Alleanza Nazionale*.

*Alleanza Nazionale* sarebbe dovuta divenire una sorta di risposta alla Alleanza Democratica proposta dalla sinistra e stretta intorno al Partito dei Democratici di Sinistra, quindi un contenitore in cui confederare diverse forze politiche, ma il risultato sarà diverso.

Il *Movimento sociale Italiano* non è più un soggetto politico trascurabile e deve essere tenuto in conto per eventuali alleanze elettorali, la legittimazione in forma concreta era stabilita dai risultati elettorali e le elezioni del 1993 segnano un punto di non ritorno. Ma al di là di questo, le diffidenze da parte degli altri partiti politici verso la componente missina permangono e Fini deve attuare una svolta capace di attirare l'elettorato moderato in maniera costante e di abbandonare tutti i retaggi del fascismo ancora presenti nel partito.

La 'creazione' di Fisichella attira diversi soggetti estranei al neofascismo come Publio Fiori, Gustavo Selva e Pietro Armani, provenienti dalla Democrazia Cristiana e dal Partito Repubblicano, ma Fini conosce la storia del *Movimento Sociale Italiano* e sa che di "(...)

<sup>9</sup> Cfr., A. Di Virgilio, *Le elezioni in Italia*, in "Quaderni dell'Osservatorio elettorale", 1993, n. 29, pp. 125-140.

<sup>10</sup> Cfr., A. Di Virgilio, *Le elezioni in Italia*, in "Quaderni dell'Osservatorio elettorale", 1993, n. 30, pp. 167-196.

<sup>11</sup> Piero Ignazi, *Il polo escluso*, Bologna, Il Mulino, 1998, p. 437.

<sup>12</sup> Cfr., Indro Montanelli - Mario Cervi, *Storia d'Italia. L'Italia del Novecento*, Milano, Fabbri editore, 1999, p. 574.

un abito cucito addosso al Msi (...)»<sup>13</sup> non ha bisogno, esperienze del genere si sono già viste durante la storia missina e con risultati fallimentari.

In questo contesto viene indetto, dal 25 al 27 gennaio 1994, a Fiuggi, il congresso del *Movimento Sociale Italiano*, il XVII ed ultimo congresso, e dal 28 al 29, quello costitutivo di *Alleanza Nazionale*. La massima assise missina, secondo il progetto di Fini, dovrebbe essere l'ultima e sancire l'autoscioglimento del *Movimento Sociale Italiano* che dovrebbe confluire, o trasformarsi, nel nuovo soggetto politico, ma prima, onde evitare una nuova emarginazione, deve attuare una svolta decisiva in senso democratico.

La proposta di Fini è frutto del progetto di Fisichella ma al quale si unisce, da protagonista, Giuseppe Tatarella; è grazie a lui che, nonostante le proposte di abbandono dei principi fascisti, quegli stessi principi che avevano tenuti uniti i 'camerati' durante i periodi più difficili, il partito non si è spaccato irrimediabilmente, è indubbio infatti che la maggiore capacità di Tatarella fosse la ricerca del compromesso: "(...) appena vedeva uno spigolo pensava a come arrotondarlo (...)»<sup>14</sup> ci ricorda Vespa, ma, onde evitare equivoci, Marcello Veneziani sottolinea che: "(...) era l'uomo della ricerca del compromesso fino alle penultime cose, ma sulle ultime cose, cioè quelle che davvero giudicava essenziali, il compromesso nemmeno lo immaginava»<sup>15</sup>.

Anche se Tatarella fa del suo meglio, sono in diversi ad opporsi alla 'svolta' progettata da Fini; i vecchi leader come Cesco Giulio Baghino, Enzo Erra, Pino Rauti, Mirko Tremaglia, Teodoro Bontempo e la stessa Alessandra Mussolini, manifestano una aperta contrarietà; ma il 90% dei delegati è schierata con Fini.

Ma quali sono i punti salienti del cambiamento? Durante il discorso inaugurale, il segretario missino descrive così il passaggio dal *Movimento Sociale Italiano* ad *Alleanza nazionale*: "Dalla trasformazione del Msi in An nasce un movimento politico nuovo. Non viene meno il rapporto associativo nel Msi-Dn, che prosegue nel nuovo movimento politico (...) *Alleanza nazionale* nasce dall'impulso determinante del Msi e deve unire ai missini, anche in termini organizzativi, i tanti che missini non sono mai stati, che hanno storie e politiche diverse dalla nostra, ma che con noi sono, di fatto, già da tempo (...)»<sup>16</sup> ma è nel discorso del secondo giorno del congresso che affronta i temi più spinosi: "(...) anche noi siamo sottomessi a quel diritto naturale che al primo posto annovera la tutela e la pratica della libertà come valore e bene prezioso ed irrinunciabile. Da essa, la libertà, discende la nostra concezione dello Stato, della società, dei rapporti economici. Ad essa si ispira l'azione politica tesa all'affermazione della persona umana, della destra italiana (...). Per questo non si può identificare la destra politica con il fascismo e nemmeno istituire una discendenza diretta da questo. La Destra politica non è figlia del fascismo. I valori della destra preesistono al fascismo, lo hanno attraversato e ad esso sono sopravvissuti. Le

<sup>13</sup> Gianfranco Fini, *Aldilà del mimetismo politico*, in "Secolo d'Italia", 23 gennaio 1994.

<sup>14</sup> Bruno Vespa, 1989-2000. Dieci anni che hanno sconvolto l'Italia, Roma-Milano, Rai-Eri, Mondadori, 1999, p. 267.

<sup>15</sup> Marcello Veneziani, in: Gianni Mastrangelo, *Ciao, Pinuccio*, Roma, Pellicani editore, p. 116.

<sup>16</sup> G. Fini, *La lezione del 27 marzo, discorso inaugurale del XVII Congresso nazionale*, in "Secolo d'Italia", 29 gennaio 1994.

radici culturali della destra affondano nella storia italiana, prima, durante e dopo il Ventennio (...)»<sup>17</sup>.

Con il primo discorso Fini cerca di limitare i danni in caso di scissione, infatti si tutela legalmente e facendo confluire il *Movimento Sociale Italiano* in *Alleanza Nazionale* ne mantiene, a diritto, il logo e la dicitura, con il secondo discorso, più politico e interessante, cerca di 'pulire' il *Movimento sociale* e cerca di accreditare *Alleanza Nazionale* come un soggetto politico nuovo e senza nessun legame con le ideologie del ventesimo secolo. Ma se il concetto calza per *Alleanza nazionale*, è assolutamente impossibile negare la discendenza del *Movimento Sociale Italiano* dal fascismo, soprattutto da quello di Salò.

*Alleanza Nazionale* è figlia di una destra liberal-conservatrice, alla quale appartiene appunto Fisichella, ma il concetto secondo il quale la destra non è figlia del fascismo e i suoi valori preesistono al fascismo stesso, lo ritroviamo già in Julius Evola e questo fa supporre che alla stesura delle tesi di Fiuggi abbia partecipato anche Gennaro Malgieri; secondo Nicola Rao, infatti, il concetto che abbiamo esaminato: "(...) è tipicamente tradizionalista. È Evola che sostiene che il fascismo è solo uno dei tanti momenti storici in cui si ripropone quella che lui chiama tradizione, ma che può, grosso modo, coincidere con i valori di quella che Malgieri chiama destra politica."»<sup>18</sup>

Fini, comunque, va oltre con lo 'strappo': "(...) se è infatti giusto chiedere alla Destra italiana di affermare senza reticenza che l'antifascismo fu il momento storicamente essenziale per il ritorno dei valori democratici che il fascismo aveva conculcato, altrettanto giusto e speculare è chiedere a tutti di riconoscere che l'antifascismo non è un valore a se stante e fondante e che la promozione dell'antifascismo da momento storico contingente a ideologia fu operata dai paesi comunisti e dal Pci per legittimarsi durante tutto il dopoguerra"»<sup>19</sup>. Il riconoscimento dei valori resistenziali da parte della dirigenza missina rappresenta un vero e proprio cambio di rotta, così come la condanna del razzismo: "L'odio razziale è una forma di totalitarismo: la più crudele (...). Condanniamo esplicitamente, in modo definitivo e senza appello, ogni forma di antisemitismo e antiebraismo (...)"»<sup>20</sup>, secondo Fini, inoltre, con il ventesimo secolo "(...) finisce il secolo del fascismo e del comunismo, dell'antifascismo e dell'anticomunismo. Ne comincia un altro in cui ci deve guidare non l'ideologia, ma l'interesse nazionale (...) poniamo fine all'esperienza del Movimento sociale italiano. So quanto vi costi abbandonare la casa paterna, che è stata per noi una palestra di vita"»<sup>21</sup>. Ulteriori segni di cambiamento si percepiscono dall'apertura verso espressioni culturali diverse, come ad esempio l'inserimento tra i pensatori, che in qualche modo possono essere un riferimento per *Alleanza Nazionale*, di Antonio Gramsci e di don Sturzo: "(...) Alleanza Nazionale porterà nell'azione di rinnovamento (...) il suo patrimonio formato di molte cose, intessuto di quella cultura nazionale che ci fa essere comunque figli di Dante e di Macchiavelli, di

<sup>17</sup> G. Fini, *Valori e principi*, in "Secolo d'Italia", 30 gennaio 1994.

<sup>18</sup> N. Rao, *Neofascisti!*, cit., p. 228.

<sup>19</sup> G. Fini, *Valori e principi*, in "Secolo d'Italia", cit.

<sup>20</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>21</sup> G. Fini, *AN e i suoi primi dieci anni*, in "Panorama", 28 gennaio 2005.

Rosmini e di Gioberti, di Mazzini e di Corradini, di Croce, di Gentile, ma anche di Gramsci.”<sup>22</sup>

Il processo di trasformazione non si conclude con il congresso di Fiuggi, ma va oltre, nonostante alcune cadute di stile, come l'intervista rilasciata da Gianfranco Fini a Pierluigi Battista, in cui riconosce in Mussolini uno dei più grandi statisti del Novecento e dove relativizza il concetto totalitario del fascismo<sup>23</sup>; Fini cerca di presentarsi sempre più come *leader* affidabile e democratico, e rinnova anche la dirigenza politica, circondandosi di giovani collaboratori come Francesco Storace, Ignazio La Russa, Maurizio Gasparri e Gianni Alemanno, definiti i ‘colonnelli’.

Nonostante alcuni attacchi, provenienti dagli avversari di sinistra, secondo i quali “(...) smaltito il piccolo dramma familiare della ‘svolta’ di Fiuggi, l’egemonia di An sull’intera area della destra nazionale e radicale è tornata ad imporsi (...)”<sup>24</sup>, la maggioranza dei politologi fanno coincidere la totale accreditazione di Fini e del suo nuovo partito, non con gli incarichi istituzionali a cui è stato chiamato come vicepresidente del Consiglio dei ministri e più recentemente a ministro degli Esteri, ma con la sua visita ad Israele, auspicata già da tempo da Amos Luzzato, presidente dell’Unione delle Comunità Ebraiche<sup>25</sup>.

Durante il congresso di Fiuggi non potevano comunque mancare le contestazioni alla svolta voluta da Fini e, naturalmente, in senso opposto a quelle che provengono dai partiti avversari. Duri sono stati i commenti di alcuni esponenti che, comunque, hanno accettato di aderire ad *Alleanza Nazionale* come Teodoro Bontempo, Alessandra Mussolini e Mirko Tremaglia<sup>26</sup> mentre altri si rifiutano di aderire al nuovo soggetto politico e cercheranno di rifondare nuovi movimenti ancorati ai valori fascisti.

La strada scissionista intrapresa da Pino Rauti, senza rendersi conto, ha di fatto avallato la portata della svolta finiana, tanto da far dichiarare a Tatarella che: “(...) la svolta sarebbe stata incompleta se fosse rimasto anche Rauti (...); tanto che io ho spinto qualcuno ad uscire.”<sup>27</sup>, perplessità sono state espresse anche da studiosi della destra come Marco Tarchi: “La svolta di An ha carattere tattico. Non c’è ripensamento che porti fuori della tradizione originaria ma solo accorgimenti per sfruttare al massimo il capitale simpatia accumulato nei riguardi di un elettorato moderato-conservatore (...)”<sup>28</sup>, a tale dichiarazione si può obiettare, con il senno del poi, essendo passati dieci anni dalla sua pubblicazione, che non si è assistito ad un ritorno al passato degli ex missini, e a nessuna

<sup>22</sup> *Pensiamo l'Italia. Il domani c'è già. Valori, idee e progetti per l'Alleanza Nazionale*. Tesi politiche per il XVII Congresso nazionale del Msi-Dn, p. 11.

<sup>23</sup> Cfr., Pierluigi Battista, *Il fascismo? Buono fino al '38. Fini: non sempre la libertà è un valore primario*, in “La Stampa”, 3 giugno 1994.

<sup>24</sup> Guido Caldirola, *I cerchi concentrici dell'Alleanza*, in “Liberazione”, 23 gennaio 2005.

<sup>25</sup> Cfr., Mario Pirani, *Faccia a faccia tra il Vicepresidente del Consiglio Gianfranco Fini con Amos Luzzato*, in “La Repubblica”, 4 novembre 2003.

<sup>26</sup> Cfr., Marco Zacchera, *C'è la nostra storia nel nuovo soggetto politico*, in “Secolo d'Italia”, 29 dicembre 1994.

<sup>27</sup> Giuseppe Tatarella, *La scissione in An*, in “La Stampa”, 30 gennaio 1995.

<sup>28</sup> Marco Tarchi, *Cinquant'anni di nostalgia. La destra italiana dopo il fascismo*, Intervista di A. Carioti, Milano, Rizzoli, 1995, p. 226.

sorta di rigetto da parte dell'elettorato che premia o 'punisce' la classe dirigente di *Alleanza Nazionale* in base alla capacità di governare, ma che soprattutto, a nostro avviso, la portata del cambiamento si avverte nell'abbandono della politica economica corporativa, vero fulcro dell'ideologia missina su cui basava tutto il sistema ideologico, verso quella liberale, in tal senso si esprime lo stesso Fini che alla domanda: "Onorevole Fini, lei prima ha sostenuto di avere fatto definitivamente i conti con il fascismo. Ma quali sono le nuove componenti culturali del suo partito?" risponde: "Indicherei tre radici essenziali: nazionale, nell'eccezione non di nazionalismo ma di amor patrio; cattolica; liberale."<sup>29</sup>

Piero Ignazi in un suo saggio si preoccupava per la mancanza di un dibattito serio anche se "lacerante"<sup>30</sup> e aggiungeva che "In attesa di manifesti programmatici e gesti simbolici che denuncino il trapasso da una famiglia ideale (il fascismo) ad un'altra, con nuovi testi di riferimento (Tocqueville al posto di Evola?), nuove idee guida e nuova classe dirigente non proveniente dal Msi (perché lasciare solo il professor Fisichella?), l'attributo di postfascisti è del tutto inadeguato."<sup>31</sup> Le parole di Ignazi risalgono al 1994, durante questi dieci anni nessun dibattito, nel senso auspicato dal politologo, ha avuto corso. Eppure, in una intervista del 2003, Ignazi, rispondendo ad una domanda di Michele Smargiassi, ammette l'effettivo cambiamento in *Alleanza Nazionale* "Toglierebbe il punto interrogativo, professore? Lo toglierei. Piero Ignazi oggi correggerebbe il titolo de suo *postfascisti?*(...)"<sup>32</sup>. Anche Ignazi, cambiando idea, fa risalire la definitiva accreditazione di *Alleanza Nazionale* al "trauma di Gerusalemme"<sup>33</sup> e prevede che non sarà la ribellione dei nostalgici il vero problema. Il passaggio da partito neofascista a postfascista, secondo l'analisi degli studiosi del settore, è completamente realizzato, il problema non si pone più, i nostalgici dell'orbace devono cercare un referente politico alla destra del partito erede del *Movimento Sociale Italiano*, e di formazioni radicali ce ne sono diverse<sup>34</sup>.

Riassumendo, la maggior parte dei politologi italiani e stranieri affermavano, fino a poco tempo fa, che il problema di *Alleanza nazionale* era la difficoltà di trainare il partito oltre il neofascismo, abbandonando l'aspetto nostalgico; la ricetta consigliata per effettuare tale passaggio era una discussione interna che coinvolgesse i quadri dirigenti del partito e la base, sulla rielaborazione, in tutti i suoi aspetti, del fascismo. Discussione che probabilmente avrebbe immobilizzato il partito per qualche anno, tale la materia del dibattito. In realtà il presidente del partito, Gianfranco Fini, ha scelto strade più concrete e contingenti, che di fatto hanno lasciato un segno più incisivo.

<sup>29</sup> Mario Pirani, *Faccia a faccia tra il Vicepresidente del Consiglio Gianfranco Fini con Amos Luzato*, cit.

<sup>30</sup> Cfr., P. Ignazi, *Postfascisti?*, Bologna, Il Mulino, 1994, p. 120.

<sup>31</sup> Ibidem, p. 121.

<sup>32</sup> Miche Smargiassi, *Le due facce del postfascismo*, in "La Repubblica", 29 novembre 2003.

<sup>33</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>34</sup> Cfr., Paolo Zappitelli, *A destra della Cdl una galassia che vale il 3,5%*, in "Il Tempo", 13 dicembre 2003.

Le indubbie capacità politiche<sup>35</sup> di Fini hanno, di fatto, traghettato il partito fuori dalla palude nostalgica, ma negli ultimi due anni nuovi problemi investono il maggiore partito di destra italiano.

Le elezioni politiche del 2001 hanno portato alla vittoria la coalizione di centrodestra, e *Alleanza Nazionale* ha visto nominati dei suoi dirigenti ministri e vice-ministri, ed il suo presidente dapprima vice *premier* e successivamente ministro degli Esteri.

Il passaggio dall'opposizione a forza di governo, per un'intera legislatura, ha evidenziato i veri limiti di *Alleanza nazionale*; in contrapposizione ad una buona considerazione, come partito e soprattutto nella figura del suo *leader*, in campo europeo "(...) An in campo internazionale viene vista e considerata come una forza politica responsabile (...) "<sup>36</sup>, troviamo la mancanza di un'espressione politica trainante in campo governativo e in generale in quello italiano. Persa la forte, ideologica, identità missina, *Alleanza Nazionale* non è ancora riuscita a creare un altrettanto forte carattere politico, capace di aggregare, e tenere aggregato, il popolo aennino e, in previsione di un eventuale fine del "berlusconismo"<sup>37</sup>, attirare a sé gli elettori moderati e conservatori di centro. La mancanza di questa specifica identità, ha portato spesso il partito su una sorta di "(...) appiattimento del partito su posizioni forziste,"<sup>38</sup> e solo attraverso l'apprezzamento del suo *leader*, *Alleanza Nazionale* è riuscita, fino ad ora, a supplire alle sue carenze che, più che programmatiche, sarebbero da definire identitarie.

la forte personalità di Gianfranco Fini ha spesso finito con il mettere in ombra gli altri dirigenti del partito, che lo accusano di avere creato una "(...) personalizzazione, sul piano decisionale (con riferimento cioè alla scelta dei contenuti), è probabilmente il rimprovero più frequente mosso al leader di An."<sup>39</sup> Ed in effetti gli ultimi anni hanno visto una serie di "fughe in avanti"<sup>40</sup> di Fini che hanno però portato a forti contrasti all'interno del partito, e il presidente si è trovato "(...) spesso stretto tra i veti incrociati delle tre componenti in cui è diviso il partito (...) "<sup>41</sup>, ed anche gli iscritti, che formano la base del partito, si sono ritrovati spiazzati da alcune esternazioni e proposte espresse dal loro *leader*. Tra questi ricordiamo la proposta di allargamento del voto amministrativo agli immigrati<sup>42</sup>, la sua posizione, per il sì, ai referendum relativi alla legge sulla fecondazione<sup>43</sup>, ed infine, "(...) l'ennesima sortita solitaria di Fini che dovrà spiegare meglio la propria posizione non solo

<sup>35</sup> Cfr., Renato Mannheim, *Ma per leader e partito i consensi sono in crescita*, in "Corriere della Sera", 19 luglio 2005.

<sup>36</sup> P. Ignazi, (intervista a cura di Michele Guerriero), *An, atto secondo*, in "Charta Minuta", n. 58, settembre 2003.

<sup>37</sup> Cfr., Ibidem.

<sup>38</sup> Antonia Masino, *Attenti: l'effetto Fini non basta più*, in "Charta Minuta", n. 61, dicembre 2003/gennaio 2004.

<sup>39</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>40</sup> Cfr., P. Ignazi, (intervista a cura di Gerardo Picardo), *An guardi al modello spagnolo*, in "Charta Minuta", n. 61, dicembre 2003/gennaio 2004.

<sup>41</sup> A. Masino, *Attenti: l'effetto Fini non basta più*, cit.

<sup>42</sup> Cfr., Maurizio Gasparri, *Sono contrario al diritto di voto*, in "Il Secolo d'Italia", 8 ottobre 2003.

<sup>43</sup> Cfr., Francesco Verderami, *Fini: diseducativo spingere all'astensione*, in "Il Corriere della Sera", 8 giugno 2005.



al suo disorientato partito ma anche ai suoi tanti esecuti.”<sup>44</sup> in riferimento alla sua posizione sulle coppie di fatto e sui Pacs, i Patti di solidarietà civile.

L’apogeo della crisi arriva in seguito ad un fatto quantomeno curioso; durante una “chiacchierata del caffè” tra Altero Matteoli, Ignazio La Russa e Maurizio Gasparri, i tre massimi dirigenti di *Alleanza Nazionale*, criticano fortemente il loro presidente “Non possiamo permetterci una campagna elettorale con lui alla guida (...). È malato: non lo vedete che è dimagrito, gli tremano le mani”<sup>45</sup>. Accanto ai tre un giornalista de “Il Tempo” che riesce a registrare la conversazione riportata in un articolo il giorno seguente. Nonostante le proposte di scuse, dopo tre giorni Fini annuncia, dalle pagine del “Il Secolo d’Italia” l’azzeramento dei vertici del partito e lo scioglimento delle correnti, definite come vere e proprie “metastasi”<sup>46</sup>, scontrandosi duramente con Gianni Alemanno<sup>47</sup> e Francesco Storace, *leaders* della destra sociale, quella con una sensibilità maggiore verso le categorie più deboli. Il presidente di *Alleanza Nazionale* nomina i nuovi responsabili del partito e comprende come la classe dirigente intermedia non sia stata all’altezza del suo ruolo, quello di governo, nei comuni e nelle regioni dove sono chiamati a rappresentare la maggioranza; da qui la necessità di una maggiore formazione e, cosa ben più importante sul lato politico, una più decisa identità “(...) per dare la percezione di An quale partito della legge e dell’ordine, spingendo anche sul tema dell’identità nazionale”<sup>48</sup>.

Allo stato attuale *Alleanza Nazionale* dipende assolutamente dal suo presidente, e lo stesso Fini ne è consapevole, scegliendo di tornare a fare politica “tornando in piazza”<sup>49</sup> e cercando di ricreare un legame diretto con la base del partito, a questo scopo decide di inviare a tutti gli iscritti e di far pubblicare su “Il Secolo d’Italia” una lettera in cui ammette che “Purtroppo i tanti impegni istituzionali mi hanno impedito, in questi anni, di essere più vicino al partito e soprattutto agli iscritti.” e chiede un aiuto per “(...) ricreare

<sup>44</sup> Francesco Kamel, *E in An torna la sindrome dello strappo*, in “Il Giornale”, 14 settembre 2005.

<sup>45</sup> (Anonimo), *Fini va alla resa dei conti*, in “Panorama”, 18 luglio 2005.

<sup>46</sup> Cfr., S.D.I., *Azzerato Da Fini il vertice di An*, in “Il Secolo d’Italia”, 19 luglio 2005.

<sup>47</sup> Cfr., Gianni Alemanno, *Un segnale di discontinuità è comunque necessario*, in “Area”, n. 107, ottobre 2005.

<sup>48</sup> F. R., *Per rilanciare Alleanza nazionale adesso rimbocchiamoci le maniche*, in “Il Secolo d’Italia”, 20 luglio 2005.

<sup>49</sup> Cfr., Valter Delle Donne, *A ottobre Fini di nuovo tra la gente*, in “Il Secolo d’Italia”, 2 agosto 2005.

l'unità interna, di sostanza e non di facciata, di tutta la nostra comunità politica e umana."<sup>50</sup>

È difficile ipotizzare quale sarà la reazione della base chiamata a raccolta da Gianfranco Fini, e soprattutto quali saranno le alternative che verranno proposte dagli altri *leaders* di *Alleanza Nazionale*, ma sicuramente possiamo affermare che per il maggiore partito della destra italiana si è conclusa una fase, quella del neofascismo, e si aprono nuove prospettive, in cui la ricerca di una specifica identità appare come una necessità primaria.

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<sup>50</sup> Gianfranco Fini, *Lettera agli iscritti*, in "Il Secolo d'Italia", 10 agosto 2005.

## *L'Institut français de Budapest*

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L'Institut culturel français de Budapest, tel qu'il a été inauguré le 25 mai 1992, occupe une position particulière tant dans la géographie budapestoise que dans la vie culturelle hongroise. Plus que cela, il se démarque des Instituts culturels des autres pays qui se trouvent à Budapest, mais aussi du réseau des Instituts français à l'étranger.

L'emplacement géographique de l'Institut français est tout à fait significatif. Il est localisé à Budapest, la capitale, comme la plupart des Instituts français à l'étranger. Toutefois certains Instituts se trouvent en « province », comme l'Institut français de Cracovie, en Pologne, par exemple. L'implantation d'un autre Institut paraît inadapté en Hongrie : son centralisme a pour conséquence que, pour une population de 10,2 millions d'habitants, la Hongrie en compte un cinquième dans sa capitale, les villes suivantes comme Miskolc ou Debrecen n'atteignant pas le million d'habitants. Malgré cela, le glissement fréquent de dénomination d'Institut français en Hongrie à celle d'Institut français de Budapest montre une revendication d'appartenance à cette capitale. A Budapest, il se situe sur les rives du Danube, fleuve célèbre s'il en est, à l'image des mots d'H. Berlioz, musiciens français qui a adapté la marche de Rákóczi :

*« Combien je l'ai admiré, combien je l'ai loué ce puissant et majestueux fleuve. »*<sup>1</sup>

Même si des raisons pragmatiques ont été en partie à l'origine du choix du lieu, cette situation prestigieuse, en face du Parlement, est symbolique. L'orientation des salles de cours vers le quartier historique de « Buda » signifie que l'apprentissage du français s'ancre dans la tradition hongroise. Les services culturels au contraire regardent de l'autre côté du Danube le quartier de « Pest », vivant et plus populaire, comme un symbole de dynamisme, d'ouverture et d'avenir. Le bâtiment lui-même, construit par le célèbre architecte G. Maurios, est totalement différent des bâtiments qui l'entourent, résolument moderne et suffisamment particulier pour être indiqué par certains guides touristiques comme monument à visiter.

L'Institut français de Budapest se distingue aussi par la place qu'il occupe dans la vie culturelle hongroise. Par son histoire d'abord, puisqu'il s'est forgé au fil du temps une réputation d'expert et de référence en matière d'art. Par les moyens qu'il engage aussi, grâce à son budget important et ses « sponsors ». Par ses partenaires culturels hongrois enfin, dont le nombre a augmenté. Ces partenaires hongrois apportent du crédit à l'Institut français puisqu'ils sont eux-mêmes des références dans le paysage culturel : l'Académie

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<sup>1</sup> Cité dans un projet de discours pour l'inauguration du nouvel institut, brochure de l'Institut français en Hongrie

de musique Ferenc Liszt, le musée des Beaux-arts de Budapest. Citons aussi le festival Sziget, connu internationalement, et la mairie du premier arrondissement de Budapest. Cette position privilégiée s'explique aussi par la place particulière qu'il occupe par rapport aux autres Instituts ou Centres culturels à Budapest, comme le Goethe Institut pour l'Allemagne, le British Council pour la Grande-Bretagne, le centre Cervantès pour l'Espagne. Rappelons que l'Institut français de Budapest est le seul Institut culturel à être resté ouvert sans discontinuité en Hongrie depuis 1947 (à l'exception de quelques mois après Octobre 1956).

Cette exclusivité se retrouve aussi par rapport aux autres Instituts français. Dans les pays anciens satellites de l'Union soviétique, l'Institut français de Budapest est le seul à être resté ouvert pendant la période communiste, avec celui de Zagreb. Tant par ses dimensions que par l'ampleur de ses actions, l'Institut français de Budapest est considéré dans le réseau culturel français à l'étranger comme son « fleuron ». Lisons plutôt la préparation du discours de C. Tasca, pour l'inauguration des nouveaux locaux de l'Institut. Malgré le caractère subjectif et élogieux que ce discours revêt, du fait de l'événement, il permet de sentir la substance de cette particularité :

*« L'Institut français en Hongrie occupe, au sein du réseau culturel français à l'étranger, une place bien particulière. Par sa situation prestigieuse sur les rives du Danube, par la qualité et la fonctionnalité de ses espaces, il jouit incontestablement d'une position privilégiée. »*

*La France disposera ainsi d'un magnifique instrument de rayonnement culturel, lieu de découverte et de rencontre, symbole d'ouverture et de modernité au cœur d'une capitale et d'un pays qui ont tant contribué à l'unité retrouvée de l'Europe. »<sup>2</sup>*

### *1. L'Institut français de Budapest, une histoire intimement liée à l'histoire hongroise*

Avant la Seconde Guerre mondiale le panorama de la présence culturelle institutionnelle française en Hongrie se compose des Alliances françaises réparties dans tout le territoire, bien que la plus prestigieuse était celle de Budapest, et du Bureau Franco-Hongrois de Renseignement Universitaire, présent de 1928 à 1939-1940, qui change de nom en 1933 et devient le Centre d'Etudes Hongroises en France<sup>3</sup>.

#### 1.1 LA FIN DE LA SECONDE GUERRE MONDIALE ET L'OUVERTURE DE L'INSTITUT FRANÇAIS DE BUDAPEST

L'Institut Français de Budapest est fondé le 5 mai 1947 sous le patronage de l'Université de Paris et s'installe rue Szende Pál (ex rue Wurm). Il devient très vite « la

<sup>2</sup> TASCA C., secrétaire d'Etat à la francophonie et aux relations culturelles extérieures auprès du ministre d'Etat, ministre des Affaires étrangères, préparation du discours d'inauguration, archivée au 13 mai 1992.

<sup>3</sup> ROMSICS I., *Hungary in the twentieth century*, Budapest, Editions Corvina/Osiris, 1999.

*pierre angulaire de la présence culturelle française en Hongrie* »<sup>4</sup>, notamment à cause de la nationalisation des congrégations religieuses en Hongrie par le régime hongrois, ces dernières délivraient des cours de français.

Cette implantation correspond à une période de bons rapports entre la France et la Hongrie, mais très vite la situation se dégrade puisque dès 1948 l'Institut est petit à petit privé de sa liberté d'action par le régime en place. L'Institut doit alors se cantonner à des activités principalement scientifiques, activités les plus neutres politiquement s'il en est, d'une part pour ne pas s'attirer les foudres du nouveau régime hongrois et d'autre part conformément aux directives données par le Quai d'Orsay, qui recommande la plus grande prudence et impartialité. Son activité scientifique l'amène à collaborer avec l'Académie des Sciences de Hongrie, par exemple. La bibliothèque est elle aussi orientée vers la recherche, la fréquentent intellectuels et scientifiques. Le jeune Institut se présente dès ses débuts comme destiné à l'élite hongroise, compte tenu du fait que les manifestations culturelles ne sont que très peu organisées, pour les raisons évoquées précédemment, et que le personnel de l'Institut tels que MM. Turbet-Delof et Bouteiller enseignent aussi à la faculté de lettres de Budapest ou au Collège Eötvös, créant de facto un lien avec le milieu universitaire. Le durcissement du régime en Hongrie entrave cette coopération universitaire puisque les Français enseignant dans divers établissements hongrois sont sommés de quitter leurs fonctions et seule se maintient la chaire de français de l'Université de Budapest. Un arrêté gouvernemental de 1949 impose l'enseignement du russe dans les écoles primaires et secondaires, en supprimant l'enseignement des autres langues. Les étudiants de l'Institut et les spectateurs des rares concerts ou conférences sont fortement soupçonnés par les autorités hongroises. La surveillance policière s'intensifie, sans toutefois provoquer d'incident majeur.

Toutes ces mesures de dissuasion amènent l'interrogation suivante, souvent abordée par les spécialistes de la question : pourquoi l'Institut Français, et seulement celui-ci, tant en Hongrie que dans les autres pays sous le joug de Moscou, n'a-t-il pas fermé ses portes ? G. Diener avance que la Hongrie voulait conserver l'Institut Hongrois à Paris et ne pouvait donc pas imposer la fermeture de l'Institut Français, au risque de se voir imposer la fermeture du sien. Les Instituts Français avaient plus d'influence dans d'autres pays communistes, comme par exemple en Pologne et en Roumanie. G. Diener suppose que, dans ces pays, il était de bonne augure pour les gouvernements de les fermer, pour éviter une influence « décadente » trop néfaste, alors que l'Institut français de Budapest exerçait un rayonnement plus limité, donc moins dangereux<sup>5</sup>. F. Fejtő, pour sa part, évoque comme raison de ce maintien le goût de Madame Rákosi, femme du chef du Parti Communiste hongrois, pour la lingerie française. Or les journaux présentant ces modèles

<sup>4</sup> DIENER G., art « histoire des relations culturelles franco-hongroises à partir des échanges écrits ou oraux inédits concernant l'Institut Français à Budapest », 1990a, pp 163 à 177, Actes du colloque sur les relations culturelles franco-hongroises des années 20 à nos jours, in Cahiers d'Etudes Hongroises, n°2/1990.

<sup>5</sup> Idées développées dans DIENER G., *Une histoire de l'Institut Français de Budapest 1947-1989. Relations culturelles franco-hongroises*, Paris et Budapest, L'Harmattan et Editions Magvető, 1990b, pp 47-48.

et ces patrons, en l'occurrence principalement le Figaro de la Mode, se trouvaient à la bibliothèque de l'Institut, semble-t-il exclusivement<sup>6</sup>. Raison personnelle qui, nous semble-t-il, pouvait avoir autant de pouvoir que les raisons diplomatiques en temps de dictature.

## 1.2 DE 1953 AUX ANNÉES 80, DE LA RÉVOLUTION HONGROISE À L'INTENSIFICATION DES ACTIVITÉS DE L'INSTITUT

L'arrivée de I. Nagy au pouvoir en été 1953 amène une certaine détente. Les activités culturelles de l'Institut se font plus intenses, et le nombre d'élèves augmente. Son rayonnement culturel grandit, et ce malgré le retour de Rákosi au pouvoir en avril 1955, et les arrestations d'une partie du personnel de l'Institut. L'amorce d'une politique de détente avec le XX<sup>ème</sup> congrès du PCUS permet aux relations culturelles franco-hongroises de s'intensifier ; à l'Institut français d'augmenter ses activités en étant un peu plus libre vis-à-vis de la police. Il conserve toutefois une certaine prudence. Les événements de 1956 constituent une parenthèse, l'Institut devant même fermer ses portes jusqu'à janvier 1957. Néanmoins, et malgré l'importance des combats à sa proximité, les locaux ne subissent aucun dégât matériel, ce que constate à plusieurs moments dans son livre<sup>7</sup> un G. Turbet-Delof impressionné par le maintien en état des locaux. Plus que cela, les activités de l'Institut reprennent leur rythme d'avant la Révolution, même si la Hongrie officielle boycotte ces activités, en représailles à la réaction favorable que la Révolution de 1956 a rencontrée en France<sup>8</sup>. L'exiguïté des locaux et l'accord des autorités françaises et hongroises amènent l'Institut à déménager.

L'Institut français investit les locaux de la rue Szegfű en 1961. Ils lui donnent la possibilité d'accueillir un nombre plus important de visiteurs, bien que la police hongroise reste toujours suspicieuse envers ses manifestations et son public. L'Institut parvient à attirer un public plus large et moins élitiste, notamment grâce à une multiplication des conférences et séances de cinéma et grâce à la renommée qu'acquiert petit à petit sa cave d'exposition artistique.

De plus, un processus de reconnaissance juridique de l'Institut français se met doucement en place au début des années 60. La concrétisation des accords culturels<sup>9</sup>, dans la même veine, donne une visibilité supplémentaire à l'Institut français. Les séances de cinéma, tout comme les conférences, se multiplient alors que les organes hongrois pour ces mêmes domaines sont moins actifs, à cause notamment de la spécificité du régime. L'Institut parvient à conquérir un public plus varié. En 1976 la téléthèque arrive à l'Institut français de Budapest comme dans d'autres Instituts français. Elle s'astreint à

<sup>6</sup> FEJTŐ F., préface au livre de TURBET-DELOF G., *La Révolution hongroise de 1956. Journal d'un témoin*, Paris, Editions Ipolya Virág, 1996, pp. 5-6.

<sup>7</sup> TURBET-DELOF G., op. cit.

<sup>8</sup> FÜLÖP M., 1994, op. cit. FÜLÖP M., art « les relations franco-hongroises depuis 1945 », pp 217 à 227, Colloque du 20/21 janvier 1994 à la Sorbonne sur Evolutions parallèles et relations bilatérales. France-Hongrie au XX<sup>ème</sup> siècle, in Cahiers d'Etudes Hongroises, n°6/1994.

<sup>9</sup> Initiés en 1961, ils donnent lieu à un « Accord culturel » (mais aussi accords scientifiques et techniques), conclus entre les gouvernements hongrois et français le 18 juillet 1966.

diffuser quotidiennement les programmes de la télévision française et permet aux Hongrois de voir le visage contemporain de la France et non celui présenté par des films peu nombreux et souvent vieux. Deux autres fonctions sont assurées par la téléthèque de l'Institut : promouvoir les programmes français auprès de la télévision hongroise et s'intéresser à la culture audiovisuelle et l'apport qu'elle représente, notamment grâce aux archives<sup>10</sup>. Le public de cette diffusion télévisuelle est nombreux, et les efforts de l'Institut sont concluants puisqu'il devient partenaire de la télévision hongroise. Le Monde du 9-10 avril 1978 résume l'impact de la téléthèque :

*« Pendant dix jours, et grâce au dynamisme du jeune attaché culturel, M. Pascal Gallet, fondateur de la téléthèque et coordinateur de ces rencontres, l'Institut Français n'a pas désempilé. Les multiples contacts pris entre chercheurs français et hongrois se sont poursuivis dans les diverses institutions du pays [...]. Une telle manifestation a sans doute fait plus pour les rapports culturels franco-hongrois que toutes les conférences traditionnelles en vigueur au Ministère des Affaires Etrangères [...]. »<sup>11</sup>*

### 1.3 A PARTIR DES ANNÉES 80 : ENTRE NOUVELLES TECHNOLOGIES ET PARTENARIATS CULTURELS

Depuis les années quatre-vingt, l'Institut français traite directement avec ses partenaires hongrois et cette tendance est allée crescendo au fil des années. Cette nécessité, selon le même G. Diener, est due au fait que l'Institut français représente une institution culturelle qui propose des programmes en Hongrie, au même titre que telle ou telle autre institution hongroise. L'originalité française et l'ancienne spécificité de l'Institut ne fonctionnent plus, il s'agit donc de se démarquer par une nouvelle originalité. Celle-ci s'est caractérisée par des expositions utilisant la technologie, l'augmentation du nombre de pièces de théâtres et par des manifestations culturelles de grande envergure, orientation qui perdure en partie dans les nouveaux locaux de la rue Fő. En 1982 la décision est prise de construire de nouveaux bâtiments pour y loger l'Institut français de Budapest, les locaux de la rue Szegfű devenant exigus. Le terrain de l'ancienne Légation française est désigné comme lieu de la construction. L'Institut français, qui était auparavant seulement locataire, donc régi par le Droit hongrois comme les Alliances françaises, s'apprête à être territoire français par cet emplacement de choix, face au parlement hongrois de l'autre côté du Danube. Pour sélectionner un architecte, un concours est lancé en 1984 et George Maurios est choisi. Les travaux commencent en 1988. Les débuts de la construction sont controversés mais les problèmes s'estompent après la chute du communisme en Hongrie. Ces nouveaux locaux ont permis un véritable changement de dimension de l'action culturelle de l'Institut français en Hongrie.

<sup>10</sup> DIENER G., 1990 b, op. cit.

<sup>11</sup> Article du Monde cité par DIENER G., 1990a, op. cit.

## 2. *L'Institut français de Budapest : un service culturel de la France*

### 2.1 FONCTIONS ET ORGANISATION DE L'INSTITUT FRANÇAIS DE BUDAPEST

Nous considérons sous l'appellation Instituts culturels les Instituts et les Centres culturels français, qui finissent par se confondre.

Les Instituts culturels français datent de la fin des années 1940, lorsque le Général de Gaulle décide de réorganiser le réseau culturel français à l'étranger. Ils sont dépendants du ministère des Affaires étrangères, par l'intermédiaire de la Direction Générale qui devient en 1956 la Direction générale des relations culturelles scientifiques et techniques (DGRCST) puis la Direction Générale à la Coopération Internationale et du Développement (DGCID), et plus particulièrement la sous-direction de la coopération culturelle et artistique. Il a été ajouté, à la fonction de coopération universitaire, de cours de français et de documentation de langue française, celle de diffusion de la culture française. Les Instituts culturels se sont développés depuis les années 1980, notamment par une professionnalisation des métiers de la culture.

88 salariés assurent le fonctionnement de l'Institut français de Budapest. Le directeur est nommé par le ministère des Affaires étrangères, il a le statut de fonctionnaire français. Les employés de l'Institut sont des recrutés locaux ou des fonctionnaires français, et notamment des professeurs détachés du ministère de l'Education nationale. Les Français occupent les principaux postes culturels ou de direction. Les recrutés locaux occupent des postes moins considérés comme celui de secrétaire et bibliothécaire. Dans le cas de l'étude du CNRS, ils sont globalement moins payés et sans réelle possibilité d'évolution<sup>12</sup>, ce que nous n'avons pas spécifiquement considéré à l'Institut de Budapest.

En ce qui concerne le financement, l'année 2001 était par exemple dotée d'un budget dont 80% provenait de partenaires locaux ou du mécénat privé, pourcentage important comparé à d'autres Instituts, français comme étrangers. Cela s'explique principalement par le fort partenariat que l'Institut français de Budapest entretient avec les entreprises en Hongrie, et particulièrement les entreprises françaises qui y sont implantées. Le sponsoring par des entreprises est un financement original. Cette pratique semble être particulière à l'Institut français de Budapest, en tout cas de cette ampleur. Ce type de financement permet à l'Institut d'évoluer avec une certaine autonomie. En 2001, sur un budget de 5 millions de francs, 3,5 provenaient du mécénat privé mais seulement 1,5 millions de francs étaient consacrés aux manifestations culturelles<sup>13</sup>. En Hongrie de manière générale le financement culturel est diversifié. En 1992, on trouvait sur son territoire 4100 fondations privées, soit quatre fois plus que dans les pays voisins, des fondations publiques et des fonds nationaux culturels.

L'Institut est aussi financé par le ministère des Affaires étrangères et l'AFAA (Agence Française d'Action Artistique). Les revenus des cours de français constituent selon les

<sup>12</sup> GREMION P., CHENAL O., 1980, op. cit.

<sup>13</sup> Brochure de présentation de l'IFB (état des lieux, programmation de la saison 2000-2001).



préjugés une entrée importante, ce qui n'est pas le cas pour l'Institut de Budapest. Ils couvrent surtout le salaire des professeurs.

Si nous considérons à présent les activités proprement dites de l'Institut, une de ses fonctions principales est la diffusion de cours de français, de différents niveaux et délivrant souvent une formation de français spécialisé, celui des affaires par exemple. L'enseignement constitue une composante importante de l'Institut, tant en matière d'effectifs que de participants et de moyens engagés. Pour cette raison nous choisissons de ne pas le traiter ici, conscient que cet aspect requiert une étude spécifique. Quelques chiffres doivent toutefois être évoqués, de manière à situer succinctement cette activité. Cette fonction est une des premières de l'Institut, historiquement parlant. Pour l'année 2002-2003 près de 4000 étudiants étaient inscrits. Les cours de français de spécialité à destination d'entreprises ou d'administrations sont délivrés aux côtés de cours de français plus classiques. L'enseignement, bien que relativement indépendant de la branche culturelle de l'Institut, est néanmoins le premier vecteur de diffusion de la langue française, et, par conséquent, sert la diffusion culturelle, celle que nous nous employons à traiter ici.

La bibliothèque, ou médiathèque, constitue un centre d'informations sur la France, le lieu de la découverte lettrée de la culture française, division de l'Institut depuis ses débuts. Elle représente une ressource importante de documentation puisqu'en 2004 étaient recensés 31 000 livres, 140 titres de journaux et revues, 4 100 disques compacts et cassettes audio, 3 100 vidéocassettes, 300 cédéroms et 270 DVD. Les livres traitent de toutes sortes de sujets, de la philosophie aux sciences en passant par une collection en français sur l'histoire et la culture hongroise. La bibliothèque est un élément charnière de l'Institut puisqu'elle représente un centre d'information important ; des centres d'informations ont été créés dans cette optique sur la France contemporaine au cours des années 90. Elle se définit elle-même comme ayant « *la fonction d'un centre de ressources sur la France contemporaine* »<sup>14</sup>. Sujet intéressant mais vaste et ne s'intégrant que de loin dans notre recherche. Tout comme l'enseignement, nous n'aborderons pas ce sujet dans le présent travail.

La branche culturelle occupe aussi une place importante. Elle organise des manifestations culturelles et artistiques et s'applique à développer les échanges culturels entre la France et la Hongrie. Des fonctions de coopération et de partenariat sont aussi à considérer. En synthétisant les grandes tendances, valable tant pour l'Institut de Budapest que pour les Instituts français dans le monde, nous pouvons dire avec P. Gremion et O. Chenal :

« *Les Instituts sont d'abord des centres d'enseignement. La culture est un drapeau.* »<sup>15</sup>

Ce « *drapeau* » a néanmoins une fonction primordiale, car depuis l'attribution de la diffusion de la culture aux Instituts en 1945 ces derniers forment un véritable réseau culturel. L'action culturelle est très variée et s'expose sous des modalités différentes. Les rubriques des expositions, des conférences, du cinéma côtoient celles du théâtre, de la danse et des concerts dans la revue « le pont des Arts », programme de l'Institut français

<sup>14</sup> Brochure de présentation de la médiathèque de l'Institut français de Budapest.

<sup>15</sup> GREMION P., CHENAL O., op. cit.

de Budapest. Le prestige que lui insufflent ces différentes activités s'explique aussi par la variété des partenaires hongrois de l'Institut. Ces événements peuvent être organisés dans les murs de l'Institut ou en dehors, notamment « chez » le partenaire. Les actions en partenariat avec des régions françaises se sont récemment déployées, jusqu'à féconder un partenariat direct entre une région française et une région hongroise. De la même manière, des institutions françaises et hongroises ont été mises en relation directe par l'Institut : le musée Galliera et le musée historique de Budapest, la galerie Mai Mano et la maison européenne de la Photographie à Paris, par exemple. L'Institut est un organisme important de promotion des échanges. Cela se confirme avec la mise en relation d'intellectuels et de chercheurs. Les colloques et conférences en constituent un terreau. Enfin les manifestations culturelles peuvent être organisées avec d'autres Instituts dans les pays voisins, notamment pour réduire les frais. La diffusion culturelle s'emploie aussi à véhiculer la production artistique contemporaine dans toute la Hongrie, notamment par l'intermédiaire des Alliances françaises, tout en soutenant la création francophone en Hongrie.

Le support de la communication, au-delà des affiches, est la revue de l'Institut « le pont des Arts ». Créée en 1992 et s'inscrivant dans le changement de dimension de ce nouvel Institut, elle se nommait auparavant la revue de l'« Institut français en Hongrie ». Elle a changé de nom en janvier 1995 pour « le pont des Arts », en jouant sur la double signification de cette expression : à la fois la proximité du Danube et du fameux pont des Chaînes qui jouxte l'Institut ; et le pont qui peut relier les deux arts, deux cultures française et hongroise. Notons aussi que le changement de nom est allé de pair avec un changement du type de papier utilisé du quatrième de couverture, associé à plus de couleurs et de photos. Les mois sur la couverture ne sont plus annoncés en hongrois mais en français. Les événements ne sont plus classés par date mais par rubrique. Cette date correspond aussi à une augmentation du nombre de publicités dans cette revue. Pourtant, à partir de 1995, le nombre de tirages diminue : de 20 000 en 1995, il passe à 15 000 en 1996, puis à 10 000 en 1998. De plus un site Internet et des brochures éditées pour chaque manifestation complètent l'œuvre de diffusion effectuée par l'Institut. Les activités de l'Institut sont aussi largement répercutées dans la presse hongroise. Intéressons nous plus particulièrement à ces activités.

## 2.2 LA PROGRAMMATION DE L'INSTITUT FRANÇAIS DE BUDAPEST

L'Institut français est une structure, qui reste carcasse vide si rien n'est créé, comme l'énonce L. Németh :

*« Dans notre société existe une illusion, source de déceptions ultérieures, que la création d'un cadre d'activité signifie la réalisation de l'objectif visé. Or, en fait, tout ce qu'on a créé ne représente rien de plus qu'un préalable. La réalisation, plus difficile et plus longue, cela vient après. »*<sup>16</sup>

<sup>16</sup> NEMETH L., *Si j'étais ministre*, cité par BERENYI P., art « Les relations culturelles franco-hongroises après 1945 et l'Institut Hongrois de Paris », pp. 191 à 197, Actes du colloque sur les relations culturelles franco-hongroises des années 20 à nos jours, in CEH n°2/1990.

Prenons, arbitrairement, comme exemple représentatif, l'année 1995. Les activités sont présentées par ordre d'importance, en nombre de manifestations.

La musique correspond au premier pôle d'activité, ce qui paraît assez surprenant puisque ce n'est pas forcément un domaine qui attire le plus de public. Nous pouvons penser à une forte tradition musicale en Hongrie, sur laquelle se calque la programmation de l'Institut. Un grand nombre de ces prestations correspondent à de la musique classique, aux côtés de quelques ensembles de jazz, des reprises de chansons françaises et peu de groupes rock. En juillet, des événements typiquement français ont aussi été organisés: la fête de la musique et un bal populaire le 13 juillet à l'occasion de la principale fête nationale française. En s'intéressant à la nationalité des auteurs (sachant que trois d'entre elles sont inconnues) on s'aperçoit que sept d'entre eux sont Hongrois et quatre Français. A cela s'ajoute six prestations hungaro-françaises, trois européennes et une d'un artiste anglais habitant en France. La répartition est donc à peu près homogène entre les nationalités des deux pays concernés, la France et la Hongrie, et avec l'ensemble dans lequel elles s'intègrent à savoir l'Europe.

Viennent ensuite les expositions, au nombre de vingt-trois pour l'année 1995. Le plus souvent des œuvres d'artistes sont présentées, Celles-ci ont le plus souvent un rapport avec la Hongrie ou la France. L'une d'entre elles porte un intitulé éloquent: « Ils ont choisi la France », avec des artistes allemands, espagnols et hongrois. Sur la totalité moins cinq inconnus, sept artistes sont Hongrois, sept autres Français, un Hongrois habitant l'Allemagne et un autre habitant la France. Enfin une exposition est organisée par l'université Eötvös Lorand et le ministère français des Affaires étrangères.

Les spectacles de théâtre et de danse représentent quatorze événements culturels en 1995. Sept spectacles sont français, cinq sont hongrois, un international et un est le fruit de la coopération franco-hongroise. Le nombre de conférences s'élève aussi à quatorze. 100% des conférenciers sont français et la moitié des sujets s'intéressent directement à la Hongrie.

Dans la catégorie « cinéma » sont comptés pour « un » les festivals de films. Douze prestations cinématographiques ont eu lieu en 1995, la majorité étant française sauf deux internationales. Considérons toutefois que les sujets traitent souvent de la Hongrie, de près ou de loin.

Enfin une catégorie « livre » regroupe les conférences ou salon relatifs aux livres. Quatre événements ont eu lieu, dont deux hommages à des auteurs hongrois, une exposition de livres de spécialités et la participation au Salon international du Livre de Budapest.

Les deux cultures, française et hongroise, sont représentées. L'Institut français de Budapest semble s'appliquer à les lier. Les échanges culturels ont donc un terrain propice, que ce soit dans le domaine du théâtre, des concerts ou des expositions.

### *3. L'Institut français de Budapest, vecteur d'échanges culturels*

Toute culture possède un caractère national et universel. La culture française met en exergue le caractère universel de la culture, bien que cette attitude suppose un caractère

national très fort. L'image des Français, fiers de leur culture millénaire, est monnaie courante. L'universalisme prôné prend donc des accents d'« impérialisme » avec l'addition d'un caractère national revendiqué. Pour autant, l'universalisme laisse la porte ouverte aux échanges, accentué par le fait que la rencontre d'une culture avec une autre tend à l'enrichir beaucoup plus qu'à l'appauvrir.

En ce qui concerne la Hongrie, avec la courte expérience d'un an que j'ai eu dans ce pays et les écrits lus, le schéma est à peu près le même. L'universalisme de sa culture est présent dans l'imaginaire collectif hongrois. Ce pays désire aussi diffuser sa culture, et s'enrichir des autres. Le caractère national de la culture hongroise est puissant, renforcé par le fait que c'est un petit pays géographiquement parlant et que la langue hongroise n'est utilisée que par ses habitants et les Hongrois qui vivent Hors-Hongrie. Le sentiment de défense de la langue et la culture hongroise est plus fort qu'en France, pour laquelle la francophonie (utilisation du français comme langue maternelle, secondaire, ou de dialogue) est importante dans le monde.

Pour sa part, la Hongrie est certainement quémandeuse de culture autre que la sienne et intéressée par elle. Ce pays adopte une attitude tout à fait volontariste dans l'échange culturel ; pour ne citer qu'un seul exemple parmi la multitude, citons la fondation franco-hongroise pour la jeunesse, qui s'occupe de recruter des lecteurs français pour enseigner la langue française en Hongrie. Ces lecteurs sont principalement financés par l'État hongrois. Ce volontarisme fait que la diffusion de la culture et de la langue française est facilitée.

### 3.1 DIFFUSION DE LA CULTURE FRANÇAISE EN HONGRIE

La diffusion de la culture française à l'étranger a évolué vers une volonté de dialogue des cultures. Dans son décret, J. Lang (ancien ministre de la culture français) affirmait vouloir le « *libre dialogue des cultures du monde* »<sup>17</sup>. Dans les faits, aujourd'hui très peu de grand rendez-vous artistique s'effectuent avec une représentation mono-nationale. L'Institut français de Budapest, par l'image de la France qu'il véhicule et la ligne directrice soufflée par le ministère des Affaires étrangères, entre dans cette logique d'échanges. La diffusion de la culture française ne s'effectue pas et ne peut pas s'effectuer de manière unilatérale. Les Instituts français sont des instruments de partenariat autant que d'influence. Ils sont ouverts et adaptés au pays de résidence et réceptifs à sa culture. En effet,

*« Le degré d'ouverture et ses modalités (nature et qualité des manifestations accueillies) doivent être appréciés soigneusement en fonction du contexte local et ne doivent pas répondre, par exemple, à un simple souci de remplissage de grilles de programmes. »*<sup>18</sup>

Cette brochure officielle, établissant les buts des Instituts français à l'étranger et leurs moyens d'actions, illustre bien cette volonté d'échanges, ceci au plus haut échelon de la hiérarchie de la politique culturelle française à l'étranger. Le directeur de l'Institut

<sup>17</sup> Décret de J. Lang du 10 mai 1982, cité par SCHNEIDER M., *La comédie de la culture*, Paris, Seuil, 1993.

<sup>18</sup> *Rôle et missions des établissements culturels français dans le monde*, Paris, Ministère des Affaires étrangères, DGCID, sous-direction de la coopération culturelle et artistique, 2001.

français, par ailleurs conseiller culturel auprès de l'ambassade de France, est au service des relations culturelles entre la France et la Hongrie.

La coopération artistique et autre est aussi de mise, ainsi que les coopérations scientifiques et universitaires. Dès 1947, par exemple, l'Institut collaborait avec plusieurs organismes scientifiques hongrois tels que l'Académie des Sciences. L'Institut français de Budapest s'ancre dans le développement culturel local et y est acteur à part entière.

Un exemple d'échange particulier est à signaler. En 1966 est exposé l'art français au Musée des Expositions de Budapest sous le titre *Peintres Français Contemporains*. Cette exposition répondait à celle intitulée *L'Art de Hongrie du Xème au XXème siècle* qui s'est déroulée au Petit Palais à Paris. Dans le domaine musical, cette même année, MM. C. Münch et P. Dervaux ont dirigé l'Orchestre National Hongrois pour quelques représentations. L'arrivée de l'audiovisuel à l'Institut français dans les années 1970 a donné un autre style aux échanges culturels franco-hongrois. Une émission télévisée française a pu donner suite à un débat animé par des Hongrois. La télévision hongroise elle-même a reconnu l'Institut comme partenaire à cette même période.

En plus de diffuser la culture provenant de France, l'Institut soutient la création locale francophone en Hongrie. Il s'applique à aider les carrières de ces jeunes artistes. Il participe aussi aux grands festivals hongrois et promeut la diversité culturelle. A cet effet, il cherche à véritablement intégrer les artistes hongrois dans le réseau artistique français et européen, et à soutenir les coproductions. Il organise aussi des séjours en France d'artistes ou de responsables hongrois de la Culture comme le Directeur du Festival d'Automne de Budapest. Symétriquement des artistes et responsables culturels français sont invités en Hongrie, invitation qui reçoit le soutien de l'Institut français.

L'Institut français de Budapest n'est pas le seul à assurer le lien culturel sur le territoire hongrois. Les Alliances françaises jouent aussi ce rôle. L'Alliance de Miskolc est créée en 1987, celles de Debrecen, Győr, Pécs et Szeged en 1991. L'Alliance française de Budapest, quant à elle, est apparue en 1892, mais elle cesse ses activités à l'ouverture du nouvel Institut français, en 1992. La fonction principale des Alliances françaises est d'abord la délivrance de cours, puis l'organisation de manifestations culturelles principalement subventionnées par des entreprises partenaires. Les Alliances reçoivent aussi des aides financières du ministère des Affaires étrangères et éventuellement de l'Institut français de Budapest. Quelques manifestations d'envergure nationale sont organisées, d'autres proviennent de Budapest. Il existe une Délégation générale de l'Alliance Française, sans doute auprès de l'Alliance française de Paris, dont le siège est à Budapest. Elles sont régies par le droit hongrois. Elles sont plus indépendantes de la politique étrangère française que l'Institut ne l'est. Ceci est notamment dû aux statuts et financements des Alliances Françaises.

Pourtant la diffusion de la culture française n'est pas « aveugle », elle a pour corollaire une prise en compte de la culture du pays, en l'occurrence de la culture hongroise. L'exemple du colloque pour commémorer octobre 1956 est tout à fait représentatif. Par l'ampleur des moyens engagés, par le nombre d'intervenants français présents à Budapest, ce colloque revêtait un caractère tout à fait exceptionnel. L'histoire hongroise est très importante pour les Hongrois. Ce dispositif français, déployé en hommage à l'Histoire hongroise, montre une implication réelle dans la vie hongroise. Il faut pourtant signaler

que beaucoup de Hongrois ne prêtaient pas attention à la commémoration des quarante ans de l'insurrection hongroise. Cette indifférence est expliquée, d'après F. Fejtő<sup>19</sup>, par les difficultés que la Hongrie a rencontrées dans son passage à l'économie de marché. Dans le même colloque, C. Kiss rapporte les résultats d'un sondage mené auprès de la population hongroise pour savoir quel était, pour eux, le jour qui représentait le mieux le jour national à leurs yeux. Alors que environ 60% d'entre eux ont répondu en citant le jour de Saint Etienne, premier roi de Hongrie et environ 40% le 15 mars, correspondant à l'insurrection hongroise contre la domination autrichienne en 1848, seulement 4% de la population a répondu le 23 octobre, date de la révolution hongroise de 1956. Cela peut s'interpréter de la manière suivante : l'événement le plus ancien représente l'acte fondateur de la Hongrie, alors que 1956 est l'événement sanglant le plus récent en Hongrie. Ce qui ne signifie pas que 1956 ne représente rien, mais que cette date n'est pas représentative de la constitution première de la nation. De plus, les événements de 1956 sont longtemps restés tabous, probablement à cause du régime communiste hongrois qui a perduré pendant plus de trente ans après cette insurrection.

### 3.2 « LIEU D'ECHANGE ET DE DIALOGUE »<sup>20</sup> : ACTEUR REEL DE LA VIE CULTURELLE HONGROISE

L'institut français de Budapest est très bien intégré à la vie culturelle hongroise, comme le montre sa participation à de grandes manifestations culturelles hongroises comme le festival Sziget. Il obtint pour cela le « Prix 2001 de la Ville de Budapest », récompensant les actions culturelles.

Il constitue un lieu de découvertes et de rencontres. A ce propos, la cave de l'Institut français, lorsqu'il se trouvait rue Szegfű, était un lieu d'expositions célèbre et couru par les artistes hongrois. Il était considéré aussi pour ses valeurs d'expertise, signe de son implantation dans la vie culturelle hongroise. En effet, la qualité d'expert gratifie généralement les plus connaisseurs. La considération de l'Institut français comme référence culturelle s'est accompagnée d'un élargissement du public. Il n'est plus seulement composé des « amis de la France », de l'élite francophile, mais aussi d'un public hongrois plus diversifié. Cela signifie que l'Institut est intégré dans la vie culturelle hongroise dans un sens large.

La présence culturelle française en Hongrie considérée ici est celle dirigée par l'État français. Il est possible de considérer l'action culturelle de l'Etat français à l'étranger comme une simple promotion des échanges culturels. Les desseins de l'Etat français seraient alors la diffusion de la culture française, et, en retour, la connaissance d'autres cultures, ici la culture hongroise. Chaque culture s'enrichissant au contact d'autres, la France gagnerait à avoir des antennes françaises à l'étranger qui s'imprégneraient de la culture locale. Les antennes principales sont les Instituts culturels français. L'Institut de Budapest joue d'autant plus son rôle d'antenne qu'il est le seul Institut français du pays, se

<sup>19</sup> FEJTŐ F., 1956 *Le commencement de la fin*, Actes du colloque « BUDAPEST 1956-1996 », Palais du Luxembourg, Paris, 28 et 29 octobre 1996, Paris, Editions Association pour la communauté culturelle européenne, 1997.

<sup>20</sup> Présentation du nouvel Institut Français de Budapest, approximativement 1992.

situant dans la capitale d'un pays centralisé, doté de moyens conséquents et intégré à la vie culturelle hongroise. Le directeur de l'Institut occupe souvent le poste de conseiller culturel. Ces deux casquettes amplifient d'autant plus ses rôles de diffuseur de la culture française et d'« imprégnateur » de la culture hongroise.

La construction du nouvel Institut français de Budapest et son action culturelle depuis treize ans confirment la pérennité des liens culturels tissés, historiquement, entre la France et la Hongrie. Cela ne dissimule pas la faiblesse de la présence culturelle française en Hongrie, par rapport à l'influence germanique ou anglo-saxonne, que ce soit pour l'apprentissage de la langue française ou en comparaison avec l'influence qu'elle peut exercer dans d'autres pays de cette région du monde. Il s'agit aussi de considérer à leurs justes niveaux les initiatives privées, les organisations et personnes qui oeuvrent pour un enrichissement des cultures hongroise et française à travers leur dialogue.

*Article inspiré d'un travail de mémoire de maîtrise « L'Institut français de Budapest et la présence culturelle française en Hongrie », rédigé entre septembre 2004 et juin 2005, lors d'une année à l'Université de Szeged (Erasmus, Université d'origine : Paris X Nanterre).*

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